First Circle - Uniting for Children

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The Children's Forum Report

Record of Proceedings from a Public Forum held October 5-6, 1999 at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton, Alberta

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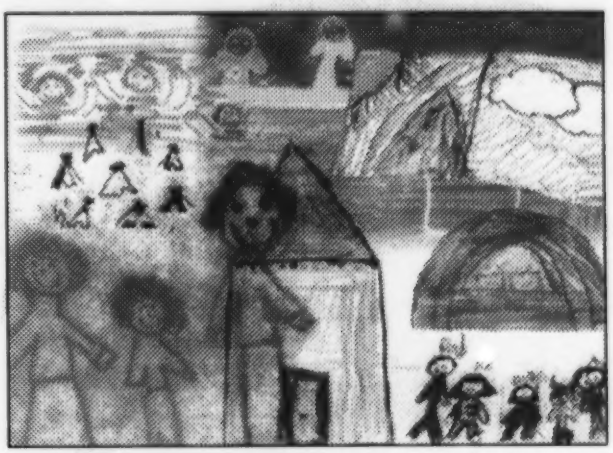

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First Circle - Uniting for Children

The Children's Forum Report

Record of Proceedings
from a Public Forum
held October 5-6, 1999 at the
Shaw Conference Centre
in Edmonton, Alberta

First Circle
Uniting for Children

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The childhood
shows the man
As morning shows the day.
Paradise Regained, 1671

The life of a person is a circle,
from childhood to childhood,
and so it is in everything where power moves.
A proverb of Aboriginal Elders

Foreword

A commitment was made at the outset of planning for the First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum that everyone's voice would be heard, whether it was the voice of one or the voice of many. That commitment included capturing all the recommendations and making a concerted and conscious attempt to use, as far as possible, the actual words of the Forum participants.

This report attempted to do just that. Minimal editorial changes have been made. In all instances where the words may have been altered for editorial purposes, every effort has been made to safeguard the intent.

It must be emphasized that all recommendations from Forum participants are included in the report. No attempt has been made to screen them through any particular set of values or any other screening criteria. They have not been made politically correct nor more palatable from any perspective. They have not been placed in any order of priority or by level of support. From the beginning, the Forum was intended to allow all stakeholders an equal voice in sharing their ideas and identifying solutions to the array of challenges facing children.

This report is that collective voice.

First Circle - Uniting for Children

Presented to the Minister of Children's Services, lead Minister responsible for the *Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action* and the partnering Ministers of Justice and Attorney General, Learning, Health and Wellness, Community Development, Human Resources and Employment, and International and Intergovernmental Relations (Aboriginal Affairs).

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First Circle
Uniting for
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Alberta Community Development
Alberta Justice and Attorney General
Alberta Learning
Alberta International and Intergovernmental Relations (Aboriginal Affairs)
Alberta Human Resources and Employment
Alberta Children's Services

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To these many individuals and groups, and to any who may have been inadvertently omitted from the lists, thank you.

Executive Summary
Introduction and Background

Since 1993, the government of Alberta has taken various steps to improve the planning and coordination of services for children through community-based service delivery. In response to community calls for the integration of services to children, the government of Alberta developed, in partnership with community representatives, the Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action (ACI). The ACI is a multi-ministry business plan to support children. It was released in November 1998. Its goal is that children will be safe, well cared-for, successful at learning, and healthy. This can only be achieved by working together.

As part of ongoing consultation with Albertans to explore ways to work together to better support the well-being of children, the Honourable Pearl Calahasen, Minister without Portfolio Responsible for Children's Services, proposed an annual children's forum. In May of 1999 a Steering Committee was struck, task groups were created, and planning for the forum began. Forum planning included not-for-profit organizations, social services agencies, representatives from Aboriginal communities and youth organizations, and the various government ministries involved in providing services to children.

First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum

The Forum was held October 5 and 6, 1999, in Edmonton. Parents, business leaders, community leaders, government representatives and interested citizens were in attendance. Day One consisted of an open conference with keynote presentations by two noted Alberta pediatricians, followed by a series of topical seminars dealing with children's issues. Day Two was organized to provide an opportunity for facilitated discussions on issues and to make recommendations to support the well-being of children.

Keynote Speakers

Two leading Alberta pediatricians, Dr. Margaret Clarke and Dr. Lionel Dibden, were keynote speakers.

Dr. Clarke spoke on the development of the human brain, from conception through childhood and into adulthood. She urged participants to focus on early interventions and supports for children between 0 and 6 years of age, which will foster proper childhood brain development during these crucial years. She contended this focus will turn society away from the common practice of just treating problems after they occur, in favour of pro-actively supporting the healthy development of children.

Dr. Dibden focused his remarks on the inter-related roles of structure, discipline and positive environmental conditions in the development of a child's social, emotional, mental and physical health. He urged the use of a "Children's Filter" in policy and planning decisions:

- How does this decision affect children?
- Is this decision in the best interests of children?

Dr. Clarke concluded the keynote presentations by noting that real change for children will come if all issues are first passed through the Children's Filter; by urging action rather than reaction; and by calling for the mobilization of all possible resources to support the well-being of children.

The Forum's Objectives and Report

From its inception, the First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum was designed to be an open dialogue as well as a call to action for all Albertans. Participants were asked to discuss strengths and weaknesses in efforts to support children, and then to formulate actionable recommendations which can make a positive difference in the lives of children.

It is important to note that the process embraced all input received. No recommendation was screened out. No prioritization of recommendations was done. This Report contains all recommendations as recorded during the various workshop discussions at the Forum.

Discussions at the 1999 Children's Forum focused on the topic streams of Families, Learning and Community; Poverty and Physical Needs; Violence, Crime and Safety; Health – Mind, Body and Soul; and Substance Abuse. The recommendations arising from the discussion groups have been organized according to common themes which arose from the discussions.

Core Themes

While a variety of recommendations were made, fourteen consistent themes emerged across the various discussion groups. These fourteen themes or actions and the central messages identified in the recommendations are (please note that themes are not prioritized):

A. Put children first
B. Increase awareness and education
C. Involve youth
D. Provide early intervention and healthy beginnings
E. Accelerate the integration of services for children
F. Address funding issues
G. Enhance the role of schools
H. Stimulate community-driven initiatives
J. Address Aboriginal issues
K. Actively lead in health and wellness promotion
L. Create alternatives in the Youth Justice System
M.Support low-income families
N. Improve advocacy for children-in-care
P. Measure progress and success

Description of Core Themes

A. Put Children First

Albertans clearly indicated their desire to place children at the top of the priority list. A number of recommendations at the Forum sought assurances that children will remain our first priority, and that we will work together as Albertans to support their success.

B. Increase Awareness and Education

There is a pressing need for more and better public information on all issues relating to children's needs. If children's concerns can be better communicated to everyone, more people will be stirred to increased action to combat the challenges being faced by children and their families.

To improve communications, it was suggested that partnerships be fostered between all stakeholders: parents, schools, media, not-for-profit service agencies, government, corporations, etc. Many of the solutions to difficulties faced by children are already available; what is equally clear is the need to share those solutions among all stakeholders.

C. Involve Youth

Youth indicated a desire for a greater voice in the resolution of issues which face and affect youth. Recommendations called for the creation of youth councils, with ongoing opportunities for youth to provide input into decisions affecting them.

D. Provide Early Intervention and Healthy Beginnings

A major gap in current services for children exists in the identification of children-at-risk in their very early years, before they arrive at school. It was acknowledged that the identification of risks and funding for the treatment of their causes are much more effective, cost-efficient, and less traumatic emotionally, when performed at an early age as opposed to later in a child's life.

E. Accelerate the Integration of Services for Children

A clear message from the Forum was to accelerate the integration of services for children. This has been a recurring issue in a number of consultations over the last few years; yet Forum participants felt that integration has a long way to go to make a difference. If groups were to work together to support positive outcomes for children, much more time, energy and resources could be brought to bear upon the central issues rather than competing for human and fiscal resources to do the same job. A compelling argument was reinforced for increased cooperation, collaboration and sharing of resources in order to more effectively and more efficiently address the needs of children in our society.

This is true of service providers in both the private sector and between government departments. The Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action (ACI) was identified as a positive first step which requires ongoing commitment and further development at the community level.

F. Address Funding Issues

Three funding-related issues were identified as items requiring resolution: 1) the need for long-term, sustained funding for community-based agencies; 2) the need for equitable funding among rural areas and urban centres; 3) the need for appropriate funding levels to ensure all the needs of children are met, i.e. prevention and early intervention.

Uncertain short-term funding for some service delivery agencies turns the focus from providing services for children to stabilizing the financial base of the agency. Stable, long-term funding will ensure that children remain the primary focus of the agency.

There is a perception that funding availability for programs and services for children is not distributed equitably.

Funding for child-related services is a matter for further discussion, and adequate levels must

be determined.

G. Enhance the Role of Schools

Schools were proposed as an obvious location for the identification of children-at-risk and the coordination of services to deal with those risks.
Schools should work in partnership with various service delivery agencies for the identification and delivery of services to children. It should be noted that outside of their educational role and responsibility, teachers cannot be expected to solely administer these services to children. These services should be provided by trained personnel from outside the educational system working in cooperation with school staff.

Introducing new programs into the school setting will yield increased positive results. Programs dealing with family issues, such as nutrition and parenting, can be delivered to parents and children alike in the school setting by all stakeholders.

Another issue is that some schools currently levy fees to finance an increasing number of programs and services. For many Albertans, these fees place a burden on family finances which may result in children experiencing difficulties in other areas. Elimination of uncontrolled and ungoverned fees would go a long way toward easing the financial burden of families, and removing a potential barrier for full participation in their educational program.

H. Stimulate Community-driven Initiatives

Discussions at the Children's Forum identified the positive impacts realized by moving decision-making out to the communities. Albertans have recognized that services are delivered most effectively and most efficiently when local or regional circumstances are taken into consideration. This is best done by providing facilitation and resources to support community-driven initiatives.

J. Address Aboriginal Issues

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders agree that Aboriginal communities must take ownership of both the problems and the solutions which affect Aboriginal people, in order to be truly effective. Aboriginal leaders are strong advocates of holistic approaches and of community-based programs and supports that would help families to become more independent, accountable and healthy.

Aboriginal children face particular challenges as they grow and develop, and Aboriginal communities face unique challenges in supporting and nurturing their children. Also, a growing trend is the movement of Aboriginal youth from reservations to urban settings. Unfortunately, many of these youth have not completed high school and lack the skills necessary to access

programs and/or obtain employment. Aboriginal people agree that new approaches must be taken in order to generate more responsive and effective practices in the delivery of services to Aboriginal children and families, wherever they may be living.

Aboriginal people identified that their political organizations and service agencies must work cooperatively on behalf of their entire community; and, that governments (federal and provincial) need to understand that their role lies in lending support to communities rather than exercising control and authority over its services and resources.

Forum participants recommended building on the strengths of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities to promote greater awareness of issues. (These findings are based on dialogue from the Aboriginal discussion groups held at the Forum.)

K. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Promotion

Health and wellness issues attracted much attention at the Forum. Four categories of health concerns became the focus: Healthy Families; Mental Health; Sexual Health; and Nutrition.

Several recommendations focused on the need for a "healthy families" model or awareness programs which would assist families in their quest for better health. Greater emphasis needs to be placed upon broad-based prevention and supporting the healthy development of children, with a focus from conception until the child enters school.

Mental health discussions centered on a recommendation calling for comprehensive and accessible mental health services for children. In some regions of the province, accessibility to mental health services is limited. Discussions also touched on the need for training in mental health issues by school counsellors, in order to assist them in the early detection of children-at-risk or children in need of mental health assistance.

Discussion on sexual health issues centered on the need for better education and awareness programs and curriculum, for parents and children alike.

The nutritional needs of children and the effects of hunger experienced by some school children from low-income families was also discussed. Food and nutrition programs, such as school lunch programs, were identified, as well as other broad-based initiatives, in order to alleviate hunger so that children can succeed at school.

L. Create Alternatives in the Youth Justice System

The need is for the youth justice system to place greater emphasis on diversional programs which teach or model alternatives to violence, and which engender greater respect for community

and society's values. Forum participants believed that Alberta's justice system must move to a more restorative, positive approach that focuses equally on rehabilitation and treatment for victims, offenders, family members, and others in the community.

M.Support Low-Income Families

Poverty is very much a reality for some Alberta families. Low-income families have few options in the short-term to better their circumstances, and must rely on society to assist in meeting their basic needs. Suggested strategies to supplement the resources of low-income families include: expanding child care programs or subsidies; tax relief for minimum wage earners; provision of adequate and affordable housing; and providing free or low-cost recreational and cultural activities for low-income families. Changes were also recommended to the Supports For Independence (SFI) allowances currently available to low-income families, including increases tied to a cost-of-living indexing system, and the creation of a joint community/ government task force to review cost-of-living
related policies.

N. Improve Advocacy for Children-In-Care

Discussions on children in the care of the Province arose in the context of other challenges faced by children. The provincial government was encouraged to review the mandate of the Children's Advocate, to ensure the purpose of the office is still valid and that concerns are being addressed.

P. Measure Progress and Success

Alberta's goal for children is that they will be healthy, safe, well cared-for, and successful at learning. It was recognized that achieving this long-term goal will take much concerted effort on the part of all stakeholders, including but not limited to government.

The next children's forum will need to consider what action has resulted, and more importantly, what impact these recommended actions have had in improving the overall status of the well-being of all Alberta's children.

For Future Consideration

Given the format of this year's Forum, some topics were identified for discussion at a future children's forum. These are:

- children with disabilities
- children and divorce
- children in foster care
- children and family violence
- children in rural and urban settings

Consideration should also be given to looking at children across developmental stages.

Next Steps

The First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum was a government and community sponsored event which brought together, for the first time ever in Alberta, a broad base of individuals and groups who share concerns and hopes for children. But the Forum must be viewed as a starting point, not as an end in itself; an evolving, dynamic process which will see some issues resolved, while new ones may appear. The goals for Alberta's children are long-term. Children will continue to face challenges, and solutions must be pursued with sustained effort to ensure the challenges diminish over time as they are tackled proactively. Everyone will need to commit to working together to better support the well-being of Alberta's children on an ongoing basis.

During remarks offered at the Forum, Premier Ralph Klein confirmed the commitment of the government of Alberta to supporting children. The Premier indicated he would be "looking to the various government ministries involved to respond collectively and with one voice" to the Forum recommendations, but noted that the government does not have all the answers and cannot meet all the challenges alone. He encouraged all stakeholders to work together to find better ways of meeting the challenges faced by children.

Conclusion

The Steering Committee of the First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum respectfully submits this report to the government of Alberta, the people of Alberta, and to all community stakeholders who share responsibility for the well-being of children.

Introduction and Background

Alberta's Commitment to Children

In response to the expressed wishes of Albertans, the government of the province of Alberta, between 1993 and 1996, took various steps to move the responsibility for the delivery of human services into communities. These steps included the creation of Regional Health Authorities; consolidation of school boards; and the enactment of the Child and Family Services Act, which established the legislative and administrative framework for regional Child and Family Services Authorities.

In May of 1996, the government appointed Ms. Pearl Calahasen, MLA for Lesser Slave Lake, as Minister Without Portfolio Responsible for Children's Services, and gave her two distinct mandates. The first was to support the establishment of the regional Child and Family Services Authorities, which would be based on the four principles of: integration of services; community-based service delivery; a focus on early intervention; and the improvement of the well-being of Aboriginal children. The second mandate was to get the various government ministries to integrate and work together to plan and coordinate the delivery of services to children. In addition, the need was recognized that stakeholders should have ongoing dialogue to discuss progress.

In November of 1998, the government released a document titled the Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action, which is a cross-government business plan for children. The Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action was co-sponsored and developed by the several partnering ministries, including what are presently known as: Health and Wellness, Justice and Attorney General, Learning, Community Development, Human Resources and Employment, International and Intergovernmental Relations (Aboriginal Affairs), and Children's Services. The Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action states the collective and over-arching goal that children will be safe, well cared-for, successful at learning, and healthy; and, that definite specified actions will be taken, between ministries and with communities, to achieve measurable, positive outcomes for children.

To advance the goal of the Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda For Joint Action, Minister Calahasen proposed bringing people together each year to explore new and better ways of working together for the good of children. A Steering Committee and associated task groups were struck to guide the design of such a conference. Mrs. Colleen Klein was invited by the Minister to bring her considerable experience in children's issues to the position of Chair of the Forum. The Forum's Steering Committee original mandate was to plan a two-day forum where various sectors could come together to discuss challenges and map out strategies for working together to better support the well-being of children. This was the genesis of the First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum.

In May of 1999, the Alberta government announced the creation of the ministry of Children's Services, in the context of a wider government reorganization. The new Minister of Children's Services is Honourable Iris Evans. This position blends the responsibilities of the former Minister Without Portfolio Responsible for Children's Services with some of the responsibilities of the former Minister of Family and Social Services. Minister Evans brought new perspectives to the portfolio, and changed the scope of the Forum from two days of facilitated discussions to include a one-day open conference followed by a single day of facilitated discussions. The recommendations appearing in this report arise from the facilitated discussions.

Purpose of the First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum

The purpose, goals and expected outcomes of the Forum were established in the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee, as follows:

Purpose of the Forum:
To provide an opportunity on a yearly basis for governments, local authorities, community organizations, business leaders, parents, youth and Alberta citizens to come together to work towards the Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda For Joint Action (ACI) goal:

"Alberta's children will be safe, well cared-for, successful at learning and healthy."

Forum Goals:
To learn more about current research in the area of child development (including brain development research) and its implications for policy, planning and programs.

To examine successful practices as well as areas of challenge in working collaboratively for children.

To explore how government, community, business and citizens can work together for the benefit of children.

Expected Outcomes:
Increased awareness of the importance of healthy development from conception to six years of age.

Heightened awareness of collective efforts and identification of areas of challenge, to support the well-being of children.

Increased understanding and commitment to collective action among the various stakeholders.

The Steering Committee was charged with the responsibility of being custodian of the planning process for the Forum, and reporting to the government and Forum participants on the findings of Forum discussions.

In addition to the involvement of several provincial government ministries, Forum planning included a large number of not-for-profit organizations and social services agencies in the private sector. Representatives from Aboriginal communities and youth organizations were also invited to participate, to ensure that all facets of children's issues were addressed. The Forum was primarily funded by the provincial government but other resources were contributed, including many donations of time, energy and funds provided through the generosity of a large number of donors and volunteers.

First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum

The First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum was held October 5 and 6, 1999, at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton. Day One, October 5th, was an open conference which consisted of keynote presentations by two leading Alberta pediatricians, followed by a series of seminars presented by over 100 speakers in selected fields dealing with children's issues. Approximately 1200 people attended Day One of the Forum.

Day Two was organized to focus on specific issues through a series of facilitated discussion groups, each with the mandate of identifying and discussing issues about at topic, and then creating recommendations and action plans to resolve the issues. Some 350 participants on Day Two attended 16 discussion groups within the following five topics or discussion streams:

- **Families, Learning and Community:**
Building relationships between schools, home and community

- **Violence, Crime and Safety:**
Identifying risk factors of injury or abuse at home, at school and in the community

- **Health, Mind, Body and Soul:**
An overview of a range of health issues including early childhood brain development, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, accidents, peer pressure and sexuality

- **Substance Abuse:**
Causes, warning signals and coping strategies

- **Poverty and Physical Needs:**

Hunger, food, shelter … a reality check

An additional discussion group addressed challenges encountered specifically by Aboriginal children and communities. Topics of discussion included:

- Holistic Traditional Culture
- Incorporating Traditional Culture into Modern Thought
- Metis and Tradition
- Native Perspective on Learning
- Recreation
- Overcoming Poverty
- Substance Abuse, Crime, Violence and Safety

The last of the groups discussed challenges faced by youth in society, addressing the topics of:

- Crime and Punishment: Violence, Gangs and Racism
- Sex Education for the Young Generation
- Personal Best: Physical, Emotional and Mental Health
- Lifelong Learning: Curriculum and Beyond
- The Origin and Outcome of Abuse
- Smoking, Drugs and Alcohol

The youth session included a live-broadcast teleconference between the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton and a number of classes in schools around the province. Teleconference production and broadcast expertise, staff and equipment was graciously provided by ACCESS TV.

Keynote Speakers

The First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum benefitted from the presence and wisdom of two noted Alberta pediatricians, Dr. Margaret Clarke and Dr. Lionel Dibden.

Brain Development in Children

Dr. Clarke spoke on the development of the human brain, from conception through childhood and into adulthood, detailing each of the developmental stages. This conveyed an understanding of the unique nature of, and inter-relationships between, the intellectual and physical development of children, and to lay a foundation for discussion of those inter-relationships by all Forum participants. Dr. Clarke noted the greatest capacity of every individual's brain is determined by the stimulus it receives between conception and six years of age. She urged participants to focus on early interventions and supports for children which will foster proper childhood brain development during these crucial years. She suggested this focus will help turn society away from the common

practice of just treating problems after they occur, in favour of pro-actively supporting the healthy development of children.

The Children's Filter

Dr. Dibden focused his remarks on the inter-related roles of structure, discipline and positive environmental conditions in the development of a child's social, emotional, mental and physical health. Disruptions in proper childhood development occur when any one of these factors is absent or dysfunctional. Efforts to improve the healthy development of children should therefore be focused upon preventing or fixing dysfunctional influences early in the child's life. Dr. Dibden noted that a child's perspective is often at odds with an adult view of the world, and urged Forum participants to pass their deliberations through a "Children's Filter", which consists of responding to two questions:

- How does this decision affect children?
- Is this decision in the best interests of children?

Dr. Clarke concluded the keynote presentations by noting that real change for children will come if all issues are first passed through the Children's Filter; by urging action rather than reaction; and by calling for the mobilization of all possible resources to support the well-being of children.

Objectives of the Forum

From its inception, the First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum was designed to be an open dialogue as well as a call to action. All who had a hand in its planning insisted that the Forum result in something more than well-intended words which fade into the mists of time after a potentially well-received event. To this end, planning for the workshop sessions on Day Two asked participants to formulate actionable recommendations which will make a positive difference in the lives of children.

Reporting of the Proceedings of the Forum

Following in this report are recommendations arising from workshop discussions at the Forum. Workshop discussions took place in five topics or "streams" as noted earlier. The discussion streams were useful as an organizational tool, serving to focus discussion on similar or inter-related issues.

As the information from the discussion groups was assembled, it became apparent that a number of common themes crossed all discussion streams. Therefore, the Recommendations from the First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum section contains information which has been organized according to these common themes.

For reference purposes, a List of Recommendations Organized by Theme, With Related Information is also included. This list is identical in organization to the recommendations found earlier in the report. Each recommendation in this section includes additional information, such as suggested actions and resources, put forward by Forum participants. This may assist the reader in discerning more fully the intent of the recommendations.

A Summary of Recommendations Organized by Discussion Group Stream is included toward the end of the report, to assist readers familiar with the five discussion group streams used at the Forum.

It will be noted that many recommendations contain information which could appear under more than one theme heading. This underscores the fact that many children's issues are closely inter-related, and to isolate them in a particular theme grouping runs the risk of overlooking those inter-relationships. The assignment of a particular recommendation to one particular theme grouping was challenging and done only as an estimation of the dominant issue contained in the recommendation. It is recognized that some recommendations have equal application within other theme groupings, and in many instances cross-referencing notes have been included.

It must be emphasized that all recommendations from the Forum are included in the report. No attempt has been made to screen them through any particular set of values or any other screening criteria. They have not been made politically correct nor more palatable from any perspective. They have not been placed in any order of priority. From the beginning, the Forum was intended to allow all stakeholders a voice in finding solutions to the array of challenges facing children. This report is that collective voice.

In addition to the thoughts expressed and recorded in the discussion groups, many comments were offered via written evaluation forms, written submissions to a Forum website by individuals unable to attend the Forum itself, and written comments posted on an "Idea Wall" provided at the Forum. Some of these comments have been placed in the borders of this report to illuminate particular concepts or to provide complementary information or viewpoints. Transcriptions of these comments are found in Supplementary Information files accompanying this report and are available upon request.

The transcription of verbal discussions in different groups into written notes and then into electronic records presented challenges for the compilation of this report. Many of the recommendations are clear and straightforward. Others are not. For a variety of reasons – for example, time constraints, demographic mix, etc. — a number of recommendations may not have been fully formulated before they were reported; as a result, their wording and intent may be obscure to the reader. Some of the recommendations made within a group may not have achieved

consensus. These factors may not have allowed some discussion groups to collectively consider, consolidate or refine recommendations. Nevertheless, all recommendations received have been included in this report.

List of Core Themes

While a variety of recommendations were made, 14 consistent themes emerged across the various discussion groups. These 14 themes or concerns and the central messages identified in the recommendations are (please note that the themes are not prioritized):

A. Put Children First
B. Increase Awareness and Education
C. Involve Youth
D. Provide Early Intervention and Healthy Beginnings
E. Accelerate the Integration of Services for Children
F. Address Funding Issues
G. Enhance the Role of Schools
H. Stimulate Community-driven Initiatives
J. Address Aboriginal Issues
K. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Promotion
L. Create Alternatives in the Youth Justice System
M.Support Low-income Families
N. Improve Advocacy for Children-in-care
P. Measure Progress and Success

Core Themes and List of Recommendations from the First Circle - Uniting for Children Forum

Fourteen distinct themes or areas of concern were identified in the volume of recommendations put forward by Forum participants. The recommendations following are organized by theme, and represent suggestions put forward by participants in all of the five discussion streams. To assist in identifying the underlying concerns being addressed as the recommendations were formulated, the originating discussion stream has been included in square brackets after each recommendation. In addition, where a recommendation contains information pertaining to more than one theme area, cross-reference notes have been included as well.

The following recommendations represent all information coming directly from all of the Forum discussion groups. Other than organizing them by theme, the information has undergone no screening or prioritization. The recommendations are printed in italics, and represent as closely as possible the words of the Forum participants.

A. Put Children First

Description of Core Theme

Albertans clearly indicated their desire to place children at the top of the priority list. A number of recommendations at the Forum sought assurances that children will remain our first priority, and that we will work together as Albertans to support their success.

Recommendations:

A1. That on the opening of the legislature in [the spring of 2000*], the Premier and the Minister of Children's Services commit to the principles contained in the Alberta Children's Initiative, thereby making it the initiative for that sitting.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream] [*original wording was "November 1999" and changed only because this report had not been completed at that time][cf. Accelerate the Integration of Services for Children]

A2. That the government make a commitment to the principle of using the "Children's Filter", recognizing diversity, in all policy making, legislation and decision making.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

A3. That government departments and agencies review their business plans and policies through the "Children's Filter."

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

A4. That all the recommendations from the Children's Forum be implemented in the next year.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

A5. That all professionals and service providers adopt a customer service policy and an attitude of respect for individuals and families.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

A6. That governments take action to deal with child poverty.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

A7. That in the next year, child maintenance and tenant laws will be made more accessible and effective, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

B. Increase Awareness and Education

Description of Core Theme

There is a pressing need for more and better public information on all issues relating to children's needs. If children's concerns can be better communicated to everyone, more people will be stirred to increased action to combat the challenges being faced by children and their families.

To improve communications, it was suggested that partnerships be fostered between all stakeholders: parents, schools, media, not-for-profit service agencies, government, corporations, etc. Many of the solutions to difficulties faced by children are already available; what is equally clear is the need to share those solutions among all stakeholders.

Recommendations:

B1. That a public awareness campaign be mounted in the next year which will promote random acts of kindness, listening to and understanding of each other.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

B2. That information in the next year be disseminated through newsletters, trade shows, open forums, and inter-agency meetings so that participants can share information and resources.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

B3. That information and resources on substance abuse be provided for youth and families at critical transition points in their lives.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

B4. That adults who are unaware of the issues be educated as to youth viewpoints on substance abuse issues.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

B5. That educators, the medical profession, police, government and the corporate communities join together in our communities, our schools, and in the media (TV, radio, print advertising), to promote education, awareness and understanding of the factors that contribute to youth crime and violence.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

B6. That an education program be developed to teach adults how to identify indicators of stress and abuse that children and youth are experiencing, and the fears children experience when dealing with this issue.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream][cf. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs]

B7. That seminars and workshops be developed involving everyone; and that twelve workshops be held within the next year.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

B8. That a program which celebrates diversity be developed.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

B9. That previous research studies which clearly demonstrate the profound impact the media has on children be presented to government.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

B10. That within the next year, action will be taken to increase public awareness of poverty, in order to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

B11. That public education will take place through the development of a comprehensive multi-media campaign.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

B12. That in the next year we will educate Albertans about what works and what doesn't work, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

B13. That the media be invited to carry programming which reflects the reality of children in poverty.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

C. Involve Youth

Description of Core Theme

Youth indicated a desire for a greater voice in the resolution of issues which face and affect youth. Recommendations called for the creation of youth councils, with ongoing opportunities for

youth to provide input into decisions affecting them.

Recommendations:

C1. That youth action committees be appointed, with honoraria, to give input to other regional authorities (e.g. schools, AADAC, regional health, Children's Services).

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

C2. That Alberta youth be encouraged to express their opinions, ideas and solutions to issues on substance abuse.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

C3. That relative to substance abuse issues, Alberta media use positive youth experiences in their publications. The writings should include all youth regardless of race.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream][cf. Increase Awareness and Education, Address Aboriginal Issues]

C4. That support for the establishment of youth councils in all communities be achieved in the next year, with the development of a guide to assist new youth councils.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

C5. That at least 3 youth representatives be appointed to each of the 18 regional child and family authorities, school boards, youth justice committees, and any other board that makes decisions on behalf of children and youth.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

C6. That a meaningful, formal Forum of Youth be created as an independent legislative body reporting to the Legislative Assembly.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

C7. That a youth gathering (forum) be held for youth and by youth, achieved in the next year.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

C8. The continuation of the children's forum, with more active, meaningful youth participation.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

D. Nurturing Healthy Beginnings – Early Intervention

Description of Core Theme

A major gap in current services for children exists in the identification of children-at-risk in their very early years, before they arrive at school. It was acknowledged that the identification of risks and funding for the treatment of their causes are much more effective, cost-efficient, and less traumatic emotionally, when performed at an early age as opposed to later in a child's life.

Recommendations:

D1. That assessment techniques and prevention programs be implemented to assess and address risk factors that are related to drug abuse. Prevention and early intervention programs will be designed for parents to teach their children about substances and decision making.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

D2. That government commit to an early intervention focus in all service areas/ministries, and still maintain and build on existing early intervention programs.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

D3. That within the next year, existing services will be maintained and additional resources will be committed to increasing early intervention and prevention programs.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

D4. That:

- Eligibility for day care subsidy and compliance be expanded;
- There be enforcement of minimum standards for day care;
- There be more Head Start Programs in more communities;
- Parental leave provisions be increased.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

D5. That more positions are made available for outreach counseling in the next year.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

D6. That single parents on social assistance be permitted to stay at home for a

period of at least one year after the birth of a child in order to facilitate/promote healthy child development.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream][cf. Support Low-income Families]

D7. Promote and celebrate the integral role parents play in the learning of their children through the provision of voice and teamwork.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

E. Accelerate the Integration of Services for Children

Description of Core Theme

A clear message from the Forum was to accelerate the integration of services for children. This has been a recurring issue in a number of consultations over the last few years; yet Forum participants felt that integration has a long way to go to make a difference. If groups were to work together to support positive outcomes for children, much more time, energy and resources could be brought to bear upon the central issues rather than competing for human and fiscal resources to do the same job. A compelling argument was reinforced for increased cooperation, collaboration and sharing of resources in order to more effectively and more efficiently address the needs of children in our society.

This is true of service providers in both the private sector and between government departments. The Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action (ACI) was identified as a positive first step which requires ongoing commitment and further development at the community level.

Recommendations:

E1. That the provincial government give priority to the integration of its services to children, to ensure that all needs are addressed and met by a continuum of services.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

E2. That departmental collaboration be improved in the next year, resulting in each department head/director (Child Services, Youth Justice, Learning, Health, Human Resources) meeting together at the committee level, to catalogue their programs in order to demonstrate how each department works in collaboration with the community. They will also apply the "Children's Filter" to the functions of each of their programs.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

E3. That within the next year, an "Alberta road map" will be created to define roles and responsibilities among stakeholders involved in delivering services to children.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

E4. Identify an inventory of services and resources, and share successful programs.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

E5. That a regional-based implementation framework be developed in the next year, for the delivery of services to children.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

E6. That a civic community be developed where everyone has a voice, everyone is aware of the issues and we all work together to solve problems.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

E7. Communities will meet and support the needs of children, youth and families through integrated service provision.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

E8. In the next year, agencies dealing with children's services will ensure ongoing, inclusive, clear communication.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

E9. That in the next year a provincial network will be created to do a thorough needs analysis/issue review for each community in the province.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

F. Address Funding Issues

Description of Core Theme

Three funding-related issues were identified as items requiring resolution: 1) the need for long-term, sustained funding for community-based agencies; 2) the need for equitable funding among rural areas and urban centres; 3) the need for appropriate funding levels to ensure all the needs of children are met, i.e. prevention and early intervention.

Uncertain short-term funding for some service delivery agencies turns the focus from

providing services for children to stabilizing the financial base of the agency. Stable, long-term funding will ensure that children remain the primary focus of the agency.

There is a perception that funding availability for programs and services for children is not distributed equitably.

Funding for child-related services is a matter for further discussion, and adequate levels must be determined.

Recommendations:

F1. Long-term, Sustained Funding

F1.1. That committed, long-term funding be acquired from three levels of government and the private sector to fund human resource positions and programs to meet the needs of children.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

F1.2. That within the next year, agencies dealing with and funding services to children will be committed to sustained, long-term funding.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

F1.3. That beginning in the next year, the province of Alberta will provide more long-term core operational funds in the areas of prevention and intervention programs, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

F1.4. That sustainable funding be provided for programs and services which demonstrate effectiveness in impacting children's health - mind, body, and soul.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream][cf. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs, Measuring Progress and Success]

F1.5. Develop new models of funding which ensure specific community and educational needs are addressed.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

F1.6. That the Children's Services Plans be implemented with sufficient funding.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

F2. Equitable Funding

F2.1. That within the next year, funding for programs be based on need, not on per capita criteria, especially for minorities, rural areas, and those with special needs.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

F2.2. That rural communities have equitable opportunities for services and programs for youth and families.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

F3. Funding Levels

F3.1. That adequate funding be obtained from public and private sectors in money, gifts-in-kind, employment opportunities, mentorship programs, role models, and sponsorship.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

F3.2. That funding for children's services be increased across the board.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

F3.3. That an increase in human and fiscal resources be made available to services for children.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

G. Enhance the Role of Schools

Description of Core Theme

Schools were proposed as an obvious location for the identification of children-at-risk and the coordination of services to deal with those risks.

Schools should work in partnership with various service delivery agencies for the identification and delivery of services to children. It should be noted that outside of their educational role and responsibility, teachers cannot be expected to solely administer these services to children. These services should be provided by trained personnel from outside the educational system working in cooperation with school staff.

Introducing new programs into the school setting will yield increased positive results.

Programs dealing with family issues, such as nutrition and parenting, can be delivered to parents and children alike in the school setting by all stakeholders.

Another issue is that some schools currently levy fees to finance an increasing number of programs and services. For many Albertans, these fees place a burden on family finances which may result in children experiencing difficulties in other areas. Elimination of uncontrolled and ungoverned fees would go a long way toward easing the financial burden of families, and removing a potential barrier for full participation in their educational program.

Recommendations:

G1. That schools will be community focus centres and community learning centres.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

G2. That life skills awareness and prevention-based curriculum be implemented in the educational system in early childhood.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

G3. That schools offer educational programs to teach students to express and deal with anger and problems in positive, non-violent ways.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream][cf. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs, Create Alternatives in the Youth Justice System]

G4. That all neighborhood schools be responsible for meeting, within the school, the special/individual needs of all students in their catchment area.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

G5. That the School Act be changed so parents have the right to choose their child's educational placement within the Alberta public education system.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

G6. That a full-time, full-day kindergarten program be provided for all Alberta children.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream][cf. Nurturing Healthy Beginnings – Early Intervention]

G7. That an assessment be carried out to determine those schools most in need; and that a meal program be provided immediately for the children in these schools.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

[cf. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs, Support Low-income Families]

G8. That the provincial government mandate the development of comprehensive school health in all schools in Alberta.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream][cf. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs]

G9. That legislation be implemented to limit school class size, and the time students must spend on buses.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

G10. That an early intervention program be implemented in every school, staffed by paid, certified personnel.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream][cf. Nurturing Healthy Beginnings – Early Intervention]

G11. That all schools have skilled resource people to address the diversity of children's needs.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

G12. That core class specialization be implemented at the high school level.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

G13. That there be mandated implementation of safe and caring schools; and that all schools have a safe school plan which includes environmental design, responding to crisis, and post-crisis intervention.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

G14. That safe and caring schools be promoted.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

G15. That curriculum design be modified to celebrate individuality.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

G16. That within the next year, additional costs for going to school be eliminated for all Alberta students.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream][cf. Address Funding Issues, Support Low-income Families]

G17. That within the next year, full, free funding for public and separate schools be provided to ensure that no school-related fees will be charged to Alberta

students.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream][cf. Address Funding Issues, Support Low-income Families]

H. Stimulate Community-driven Initiatives

Description of Core Theme

Discussions at the Children's Forum identified the positive impacts realized by moving decision-making out to the communities. Albertans have recognized that services are delivered most effectively and most efficiently when local or regional circumstances are taken into consideration. This is best done by providing facilitation and resources to support community-driven initiatives.

Recommendations:

H1. In the next year we will commit to using the "Children's Filter" at all levels and in all communities.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream][cf. Accelerate the Integration of Services to Children]

H2. That within the next year, service delivery systems will be restructured to be more supportive, in order to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

H3. That a universal infant/family screening program be implemented in every community in Alberta to identify children/families in need of support.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

H4. In the next year holistic family resource centres will be established and supported.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

H5. That a provincial 'safe and caring centre' be created to build consistency into safe and caring programs and services, and that each community have an inter-agency group to serve the same function at the local level.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

H6. That high quality, meaningful recreation and leisure opportunities be established at the neighbourhood level to meet the daily developmental needs of children and families.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

H7. That community-driven initiatives will be increased by:

- Sharing effective programs throughout the province by developing a list of those that work well;
- Providing facilitators and resources to support community-driven initiatives;
- Making community development a criterion for contracted service providers, and support community development with specific funding.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

J. Address Aboriginal Issues

Description of Core Theme

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal leaders agree that Aboriginal communities must take ownership of both the problems and the solutions which affect Aboriginal people, in order to be truly effective. Aboriginal leaders are strong advocates of holistic approaches and of community-based programs and supports that would help families to become more independent, accountable and healthy.

Aboriginal children face particular challenges as they grow and develop, and Aboriginal communities face unique challenges in supporting and nurturing their children. Also, a growing trend is the movement of Aboriginal youth from reservations to urban settings. Unfortunately, many of these youth have not completed high school and lack the skills necessary to access programs and/or obtain employment. Aboriginal people agree that new approaches must be taken in order to generate more responsive and effective practices in the delivery of services to Aboriginal children and families, wherever they may be living.

Aboriginal people identified that their political organizations and service agencies must work cooperatively on behalf of their entire community; and, that governments (federal and provincial) need to understand that their role lies in lending support to communities rather than exercising control and authority over its services and resources.

Forum participants recommended building on the strengths of the relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities to promote greater awareness of issues.

(These findings are based on dialogue from the Aboriginal discussion groups held at the Forum.)

Recommendations:

J1. Place the focus on the Aboriginal pillar in the next year.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

J2. That government and community work together to promote greater education and awareness toward the goal of building on the strengths and relationships of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream][cf. Increase Awareness and Education]

J3. Create a cross-ministry approach to address issues faced by Aboriginal children and youth.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

K. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs

Description of Core Theme

Health and wellness issues attracted much attention at the Forum. Four categories of health concerns became the focus: Healthy Families; Mental Health; Sexual Health; and Nutrition.

Several recommendations focused on the need for a "healthy families" model or awareness programs which would assist families in their quest for better health. Greater emphasis needs to be placed upon broad-based prevention and supporting the healthy development of children, with a focus from conception until the child enters school.

Mental health discussions centered on a recommendation calling for comprehensive and accessible mental health services for children. In some regions of the province, accessibility to mental health services is limited. Discussions also touched on the need for training in mental health issues by school counsellors, in order to assist them in the early detection of children-at-risk or children in need of mental health assistance.

Discussion on sexual health issues centered on the need for better education and awareness programs and curriculum, for parents and children alike.

The nutritional needs of children and the effects of hunger experienced by some school children from low-income families was also discussed. Food and nutrition programs, such as school lunch programs, were identified, as well as other broad-based initiatives, in order to alleviate hunger so that children can succeed at school.

Recommendations:

K1. Healthy Families

K1.1.Promote family wellness in order to reduce family violence.
[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

K1.2.That a "Healthy Families Program" be introduced and implemented in Alberta, without stigma, in order to identify high risk families and to break the cycle of risks.
[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

K1.3.That the 'Hawaii Healthy Start' screening model be put in place and used in every community in Alberta.
[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream][cf. Stimulate Community-driven Initiatives]

K1.4.That implementation of the Healthy Families Program model (Hawaii) be implemented in the next year.
[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

K1.5.That cost reductions through savings on long term beds be applied to primary prevention programs such as Health for Two, Healthy Families, Head Start, LOOK AT ME, parenting programs, etc.
[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

K1.6.Recognize, support and build stability for successful programs wherever they are.
[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

K2. Mental Health

K2.1.That comprehensive, accessible mental health services for children be provided.
[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

K3. Sexual Health

K3.1.We recommend:

- That the current sexual health curriculum be revised to include diversity (i.e. sexual orientation, disabilities), alternatives to intercourse, and removal of the abstinence-based system

- That health education for parents and professionals (i.e. doctors, counselors, teachers) include diversity education\acceptance education. This could be in the form of a provincial sexual health conference
- That a larger focus be placed on prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and teen pregnancy
- That a larger focus be placed on the fact of being sexual beings from birth until death
- That there be increased availability of protection\prevention devices (condoms, dental dams, rubber gloves, birth control devices)
- That the cost of birth control and sexually transmitted disease prevention devices be decreased.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

K4. Nutrition

K4.1.That within the next year, lunch programs will be implemented in schools, with training and nutritional information, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

K4.2.That every child have access to a daily nutritional lunch at school.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

K4.3.That province-wide school/community lunch/food programs be implemented.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

K4.4.That the basic needs of each child be met, in terms of hunger and a home.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

K5. Prevention Initiatives

K5.1.That in the next year prevention initiatives will be increased/enhanced to effectively address the impact of substance abuse on children in Alberta.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

K5.2.That free, accessible and efficient services and treatment programs be established which effectively implement programs that target the impact of substance abuse on Alberta youth.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

K5.3. That in the next year legislation be established which defines substance abuse, including alcohol, street drugs prescription drugs, tobacco, solvents, etc.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

L. Create Alternatives in the Youth Justice System

Description of Core Theme

The need is for the youth justice system to place greater emphasis on diversional programs which teach or model alternatives to violence, and which engender greater respect for community and society's values. Forum participants believed that Alberta's justice system must move to a more restorative, positive approach that focuses equally on rehabilitation and treatment for victims, offenders, family members, and others in the community.

Recommendations:

L1. That corporal punishment be banned and replaced with non-violent discipline techniques.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

L2. That the justice system rely less on youth incarceration as a means to solve crime and violence, in favor of alternative options such as Healing and Sentencing Circles, Alternative Measures, Community Mediation, etc.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

L3. That certain minor youth offences be decriminalized.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

L4. That, within the next year, diversional justice programs receive more resources for social services provided to youth.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

M. Support Low-income Families

Description of Core Theme

Poverty is very much a reality for some Alberta families. Low-income families have few options in the short-term to better their circumstances, and must rely on society to assist in meeting their basic needs. Suggested strategies to supplement the resources of low-income families include: expanding child care programs or subsidies; tax relief for minimum wage earners; provision of

adequate and affordable housing; and providing free or low-cost recreational and cultural activities for low-income families. Changes were also recommended to the Supports For Independence (SFI) allowances currently available to low-income families, including increases tied to a cost-of-living indexing system, and the creation of a joint community/government task force to review cost-of-living related policies.

Recommendations:

M1. Housing

M1.1. That in the next year there will be an improvement in shelter costs, supply and conditions, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M1.2. That an investment be made in affordable housing for low-income families.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M1.3. That safe, adequate and affordable housing be provided by:

- Increasing the number of subsidies available to low income families;
- Providing damage deposits for those on public assistance;
- Developing a plan for long-term housing needs.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M2. Child Care

M2.1. That in the next year, child care subsidies will be available universally to all children aged 0-12, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M2.2. That funding for universal day care should be achieved in the next year, and the raising of minimum standards for day care should be achieved in the next year.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

M2.3. That in the next year, child care opportunities and subsidies will be increased.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M3. Recreation and Culture

M3.1. That in the next year, affordable or subsidized recreation and after-school programs will be offered to children and parents, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M3.2. That within the next year:

- Free recreational/cultural programs for children and youth be provided;
- Municipalities/towns/counties hire youth workers to provide programming and support for these programs;
- Cost will not be a barrier to participation in public programs and facilities.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4. Supports for Independence

M4.1. That the Supports For Independence shelter allowance must meet the cost of food and other basic needs. The Supports For Independence allowance should include money for school fees, damage deposits, bus passes, etc.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.2. That the Supports For Independence rates and accessibility be increased for youth.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.3. That a government/community resource group be established to review Supports For Independence policy, regulations and the appeal process.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.4. That age-appropriate income supports be provided for youth at risk.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.5. That in the next year, income for low-income families will be increased.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.6. That in the next year, benefits will increase comparable to the cost of living in communities, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.7. That in the next year, more money will be put in the hands of needy Albertans to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.8. That anyone living below the low-income cut-off thresholds (working poor) should be entitled to free dental, medical and optical benefits.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.9. That anyone making minimum wage should not be required to pay taxes.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.10. That the government re-prioritize spending to eliminate family poverty by changing, for example, the debt reduction act to require 75% of any surplus to be reinvested into social programs and supports.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

N. Improve Advocacy for Children-in-care

Description of Core Theme

Discussions on children in the care of the province arose in the context of other challenges faced by children. The provincial government was encouraged to review the mandate of the Children's Advocate, to ensure the purpose of the office is still valid and that concerns are being addressed.

Recommendations:

N1. That implementation of a province-wide citizen review board for children-in-care should be achieved in the next year.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

N2. That stability for child welfare children be ensured.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

N3. That the government change the legislation to make the Children's Advocate accountable to the Alberta legislature, not just the Minister of Children's Services. And, that the review of the mandate of the Children's Advocate

be continued.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

N4. Create a children's advocate who will speak for all children. (Maintain current office and funding of current child welfare advocate but create another advocate for all children.)

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

P. Measuring Progress and Success

Description of Core Theme

Alberta's goal for children is that they will be healthy, safe, well cared-for, and successful at learning. It was recognized that achieving this long-term goal will take much concerted effort on the part of all stakeholders, including but not limited to government.

The next children's forum will need to consider what action has resulted, and more importantly, what impact these recommended actions have had in improving the overall status of the well-being of all Alberta's children.

Recommendations:

P1. Improve accountability.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

P2. That standard measures be established and used to evaluate program effectiveness.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

P3. That delivered programs and services are research-based and demonstrate effectiveness.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

P4. That sustainable funding be based on demonstrated effectiveness of program delivery.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

P5. That all current children's programs and services be evaluated, and reallocate funding to those that demonstrate effectiveness.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Measuring Success – How Will We Know We are Succeeding?

Holding a public forum, discussing issues and creating recommendations and identifying themes raises the expectation that action will be taken. There is a need to measure progress in two ways: 1) on actions recommended in this report; and 2) on the overall well-being of children.

Stakeholders will need to determine which recommendations will have the greatest impacts for children and take appropriate action.

The ultimate measure of success will be when all of Alberta's children are healthy, safe, well cared-for and successful at learning. Working toward this long-term goal will take ongoing commitment and effort on the part of all sectors of society, and it must be recognized that some children will always face challenges which require support.

The creation of the Alberta Children's Initiative:
An Agenda for Joint Action, was identified as a positive first step. This Agenda for Joint Action includes goals, strategies and action plans, expected outcomes and performance measures. These outcomes and measures will provide an annual picture of the status of Alberta's children.

It is our understanding that the Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action first status report on children, with various performance measures, is expected to be released in June, 2000. This status report will provide a baseline against which progress on improving the well-being of Alberta's children can be evaluated.

Performance measurement in this area is new, but Alberta is viewed to be leading the nation in this field. While the following measures have room for improvement in the long-term, and new ones need to be added to better inform outcomes, they will serve as a good starting point.

A summary of the current outcomes and measures in the Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action follows:

1. Children are born healthy

Measures:

- percentage of low birth weight babies in the Aboriginal communities
- percentage of low birth weight babies in the non-Aboriginal communities
- percentage of high birth weight babies in the Aboriginal communities
- percentage of high birth weight babies in the non-Aboriginal communities

- percentage of mothers receiving pre-natal health care
- rate of premature births
- infant mortality rate amongst Aboriginal children
- infant mortality rate amongst non-Aboriginal children
- percentage of mothers reporting the abuse of alcohol during pregnancy
- percentage of mothers reporting the abuse of other substances during pregnancy
- percentage of mothers reporting the use of tobacco during pregnancy

2. Children are safe and free from abuse or neglect

Measures:
- Incidence of reported child abuse or neglect
- percentage of students, parents and public who are satisfied that schools provide a safe and caring environment
- the incidence and type of unintentional injury

3. Children and families have adequate resources to meet their needs

Measures:
- percentage of children living in families above the national Market Basket Measure of low-income
- median income for two-parent families
- median income for single-parent families

4. The culture, spirituality, history and traditions of Aboriginal children are respected

Measures:
- percentage of Aboriginal people satisfied with their involvement in the governance, delivery, and evaluation of services for Aboriginal children
- proportion of Aboriginal children in the care of the province
- proportion of First Nations children being cared-for through a First Nation Child Welfare Agreement

5. Children are ready to learn when they start school

Measures:
- percentage of two year old children who have been appropriately immunized

6. Children succeed in school

Measures:

- student achievement at grades 3, 6, 9, and 12
- percentage of high school students who are satisfied with the quality of education
- percentage of students completing high school
- percentage of children identified with severe emotional/behavioural special needs
- percentage of children with special needs achieving the goals of their individual program plans
- percentage of mild/moderate students who meet the acceptable standard for their expected grade level

7. Children and youth practice healthy behaviours

Measures:

- percentage of teens who do not smoke
- births to mothers under age 18
- percentage of children who take part in physical activity
- percentage of children participating in skill building activities
- percentage of youth who use drugs or alcohol regularly
- rate of drug and alcohol related deaths among youth
- suicide rate among children and youth
- rate of youth charged with criminal offences
- percentage of repeat young offenders
- percentage of youth sentenced to custody

8. Youth are successful in the transition to adulthood

Measures:

- percentage of students entering post-secondary education directly by age 25
- rate of preparedness of youth for the work force
- percentage of youth aged 18-25 employed

A number of strategies have been identified in the Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action
to achieve the expected outcomes. These include:

- Articulating the provincial government's direction to support children including goals, outcomes, measures, strategies and accountability
- Establishing initiatives to improve supports and resources for children and families in areas

identified as priorities

- Establishment of an operational environment within government that supports integrated service delivery

For Future Consideration

The First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum was the first of a series of annual forums envisioned to continually monitor the status of children and to pursue collaborative solutions to the challenges they face. Attempts were made in this first gathering to be as inclusive as possible. Nonetheless, by choosing specific topic streams as an organizational tool, some groups felt they did not have a place to voice their concerns.

If future forums are organized by topics, the following issues were specifically pointed out as requiring further consideration:

1. Children with Disabilities
Many children face a variety of physical, mental, social, emotional and learning disabilities which present particular challenges to their development. Examination of the challenges facing children with disabilities will enable the further development of appropriate supports and assistance to aid in their progression and growth.

2. Children and Divorce
Divorce is a fact of society which has profound impacts on children. Further examination of these impacts will ensure that all possible means are being pursued to minimize the negative aspects of children in a divorce situation.

3. Foster Care
A number of Forum participants expressed the desire to pursue in greater depth the concerns of children in provincial care.

4. Children and Family Violence
Family violence has a number of severely traumatic effects on children. Examination of the issues will direct efforts to minimizing the negative effects.

5. Children in Rural and Urban Settings
Children in remote rural settings often are at a disadvantage when specialized services are required. Those services may only be readily available in a distant urban setting where greater demand results in a more cost-effective delivery mechanism because of the greater numbers served. Nevertheless, a balanced service delivery system should be examined to ensure children are not placed at a disadvantage simply due to geography.

It was also proposed that the next forum's discussion groups be organized according to the developmental stages children pass through, rather than on topics. This would be a more integrated

and inclusive approach, where everyone will have a place to share ideas and voice their concerns.

Where to From Here? Next Steps

The First Circle – Uniting for Children report will be distributed early in the year 2000. The Forum brought together, for the first time ever in Alberta, a broad cross-section of Albertans who share concerns for children. The Forum was successful in identifying a number of opportunities and the challenges faced by children and by the various sectors of society which provide supports for children and their families.

Laudable though that may be, the Forum must only be viewed as a starting point, not as the end point. An evolving, dynamic process will see some issues resolved, while new ones may appear. Children will continue to face challenges, and solutions must be pursued with sustained effort to ensure the challenges diminish over time as they are tackled proactively. For these reasons, dialogue must be ongoing. The "meeting of minds" in a children's forum must occur regularly in order to evaluate progress and ensure collaborative efforts do not lag.

Response to the Report

During the course of the 1999 Children's Forum, Premier Klein requested a joint response from government on the report and its recommendations. It is anticipated this response will follow as soon as possible after the release of this report.

Where resources are limited, prioritization must occur and assurances are needed that they are being directed to those initiatives which yield the most positive results.

Updating of the Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action

Based on input received at the Forum, it is essential that the Alberta Children's Initiative: An Agenda for Joint Action be updated annually to reflect the input from the Forum.

The Next Forum and Reporting on Progress

From its beginning, the Children's Forum was intended to be an annual event. However, given the expanded scope of the Forum, the timing of the Forum may need to be adjusted. A Forum held in the spring may provide advantages over holding it in the fall. In view of the annual government fiscal cycle, the timing of the Forum would be better if it occurred in the spring. This timing change would allow for faster, more efficient incorporation of recommended actions into business and budget plans. The timing change also may be advantageous to many not-for-profit organizations and private-sector agencies that operate on similar fiscal cycles.

Additionally, for the 1999 Children's Forum, at least one full year will be needed between the

release of this report and the next forum. This will allow time for the implementation of priority initiatives, for an initial measurement of their progress and effectiveness, and to map out issues requiring discussion at the next Forum.

The Steering Committee strongly recommends that future forums occur annually, starting from spring 2001.

Conclusion

The First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum was an historic event. For the first time in Alberta, all stakeholders had the opportunity to address, together, the issues facing children. It was a good starting point. We look forward to providing all Alberta's children with the opportunity to be safe, happy, healthy and successful at learning.

The Steering Committee of the First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum respectfully submits this report to the government of Alberta, the people of Alberta, and to all community stakeholders who share responsibility for the well-being of children.

Appendices

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Appendix 1

For reference purposes, a List of Recommendations Organized by Theme, With Related Information is included. This list matches the format and organization of the recommendations found earlier in the report, and includes supplemental categories of information attached to each recommendation as put forward by Forum participants.

Appendix 2

A Summary of Recommendations Organized by Discussion Group Stream is included here to assist readers familiar with the five topic streams used for discussions at the Forum.

Appendix 3

In addition to the thoughts expressed and recorded in the discussion groups, many comments were offered via written evaluation forms, written submissions to a Forum website by individuals unable to attend the Forum itself, and written comments posted on an "Idea Wall" provided at the Forum. Transcriptions of these comments are found in Supplementary Information files accompanying this report and are available upon request. Appendix 3 contains a list of the Supplementary Information available under separate cover.

Appendix 1

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS ORGANIZED BY THEME, WITH RELATED INFORMATION

This List of Recommendations Organized by Theme, With Related Information is included here for reference purposes. This list is identical in organization to the recommendations found earlier in the report. Each recommendation here includes additional information, such as suggested actions and resources, put forward by Forum participants. This may assist the reader in discerning more fully the intent of the recommendations.

A Summary List of Recommendations Organized by Discussion Group Stream is included in a following chapter, to assist readers familiar with the five discussion group streams used at the Forum.

A. Put Children First

A1. That on the opening of the legislature in [the spring of 2000*], the Premier and the government commit to the principles contained in the Alberta Children's Initiative, thereby making it the initiative for that sitting.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

[*original wording was "November 1999" and changed only because this report had not been completed at that time]

Who: Premier and the Cabinet Ministers who signed the Alberta Children's Initiative and, under them, their Deputy Ministers.
Suggested Actions: Track true costs for services provided to children under Children and Family Service Authorities; this may require reallocation of funding from one ministry to another.
Joint business planning for joint service delivery at local and ministry level.
Ministry of Children's Services, regional health authorities, agencies and communities.
Set measurable targets for achievements under the Alberta Children's Initiative.
Resources: Ministries, regional health authorities and communities.
Expected Outcomes: More responsive services to meet children's needs.
Everyone will be accountable for promises made.

A2. That the government make a commitment to the principle of using the "Children's Filter", while recognizing diversity, in all policy making, legislation and decision making.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Who: Cabinet.
Resources: Provincial government.
Suggested Action: Clarify, define and utilize the Children's Filter.

Who: Designated ministry to lead the process, including stakeholder input.
Resources: Designated ministry to lead the process and support participation of stakeholders.
Suggested Action: Train all government department and regional authorities to understand and use the filter.

Who: Designated ministry with input from adult educators.
Resources: Designated ministry.
Suggested Action: Apply Children's Filter to the development and approval of ministry and regional authority business plans.

Who: All ministries and regional authorities.
Resources: All ministries and regional authorities. It must become part of their processes.
Suggested Action: Monitor the use of the Children's Filter in the ministry business plans and operations, and report publicly on its use.

Who: An independent watchdog (like the auditor general) to monitor the ministries.
Ministries would monitor regional authorities.
Public would have an avenue to express when filter is not being used (i.e. ombuds-person or advocate).
Resources: Designated ministry with financial support from watchdog (which remains independent of government).
Expected Outcomes: Better likelihood that government policy and legislation and decision making would support the development of healthy kids.
Diversity would be addressed and supported.
Families would be able to have their voices heard.

A3. That government departments and agencies review their business plans and policies through the "Children's Filter."

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: Provincial government, service delivery agencies.
Resources: Inclusive in current processes.
Expected Outcomes: Increased departmental awareness of children and poverty.

A4. That all the recommendations from the Children's Forum be implemented in the next year.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Who: Mr. Klein and his inner cabinet. (This has been assessed to death, get on with the action.)
Resources: Collaboration of existing ministries with more effective and efficient use of funds, together with reinvestment of surplus funds.
Expected Outcomes: Politicians (senior bureaucrats as well as front-line workers) need to change their mind-set to truly make children the priority or face termination (accountability and responsibility).
Children will have a stronger foundation to build a brighter future and a better world, generation upon generation. The message must be: "children, you are loved, protected and cared-for because you are number one."

A5. That all professionals and service providers adopt a customer service policy and an attitude of respect for individuals and families.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Inservice training for customer service to be provided by an outside, independent agency, to the professionals and service providers (i.e. income security workers, etc.). From that point, a follow-up should be held to ensure accountability to the community at large. Confidential evaluations should be held for clients, rate-payers, co-workers, etc.
Incorporate positive client advocacy as a role of government front-line workers.
Who: Independent training agency, provincial government.
Resources: provincial government and employees.
Expected Outcomes: Respect for the clients/families (self-worth).

A6. That governments take action to deal with child poverty.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Information is to be gathered by people that are involved and working with the poor/low income families, such as Social Services (Child Welfare) workers; parents; youth; food banks; service agencies (Family And Community Support Services; AADAC; Friendship Centre; etc.); schools; churches; women/family shelters; Children's Services Authorities; RCMP.
Data gathered will show that poverty is rising in Alberta and what can be done to improve the life of these families.
Government will be notified by letter/in person to the Minister of Children's Services. Statistics will be given to government.
Public awareness by newsletters can be done. Also by media.

Resources: Government funding; corporate donations.
Expected Outcomes: Way of life for children will certainly improve.

A7. That in the next year, child maintenance and tenant laws will be made more accessible and effective, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

B. Increase Awareness and Education

Recommendations from the Forum

B1. That a public awareness campaign be mounted in the next year which will promote random acts of kindness, listening to and understanding of each other.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Who: Government, drama groups, volunteers, parents, youth.
Resources: Public awareness campaigns funded by government, corporate sponsors, schools, community groups, churches and media.
Expected Outcomes: The individual will feel supported, happier and more "special".

B2. That information in the next year be disseminated through newsletters, trade shows, open forums, and inter-agency meetings so that participants can share information and resources.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Who: One-stop shopping resource centers, government and non-government agencies, and community groups and individuals.
Resources: Children's services authorities and others interested.
Expected Outcomes: Acceptance on part of community and willingness to allocate resources and become involved in problem solving process.

B3. That information and resources on substance abuse be provided for youth and families at critical transition points in their lives.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Publicize access to phone numbers on where to get help, e.g. RCMP, schools, counselors, teachers, media, TV, newspaper, mall demonstrations, recreation clubs and facilities,

internet, videos, brochures, educational materials, etc.
Who: Government, health justice, education children services, RCMP, AADAC, youth input and interaction, community agencies, churches and not-for-profit.
Resources: Government, community volunteers, local business, corporate sponsors, youth.
Expected Outcomes: Youth and families will have better access to information, which will enable them to make positive steps toward change.

B4. That adults who are unaware of the issues be educated as to youth viewpoints on substance abuse issues.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Who: Youth with the support of adults, youth with the support of youth, adults with the support of adults.

B5. That educators, the medical profession, police, government and the corporate communities join together in our communities, our schools, and in the media (TV, radio, print advertising), to promote education, awareness and understanding of the factors that contribute to youth crime and violence.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: Educators, medical professionals, police, government, corporations, parents, youth.
Resources: To be provided by all stakeholders, coordinated by government.
Expected Outcomes: Better decision-making concerning effective youth programs.
Emotionally and physically healthier children.

B6. That an education program be developed to teach adults how to identify indicators of stress and abuse that children and youth are experiencing, and the fears children experience when dealing with this issue.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream] [cf. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs]

Why: To identify the needs of children and take a proactive stance by making referrals to appropriate resources; and to educate adults to understand youth (age 0 – 18).
Who: Collaboration of child welfare service providers, police and youth who have lived the experience.
Resources: Partnership between three government levels and private sector.
Expected Outcomes: Open communication between adults and youth.
Decreased stress on children.
Problems of children identified and dealt with.

Will not result in negative acting-out behaviour.
Increased parental awareness and involvement.

B7. That seminars and workshops be developed involving everyone; and that twelve workshops be held within the next year.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Why: To deliver awareness, gather information, and promote community involvement.
Who: Community drama groups, school groups, businesses and agencies, community and government (all departments) in partnership.
Resources: People with experience.
Community (schools, health centres, RCMP, etc.).
Media.
Government.
Expected Outcomes: Community involvement.
People caring about the children and their families; it will offer them choices.
A safer environment home, school and community.
A new attitude.
Healthier families.
Increased awareness of risks.
More knowledgeable of the effects.
An opportunity to be heard.

B8. That a program which celebrates diversity be developed.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Identify role models within all youth populations in a similar way the Metis settlements run their programs.
Build on the strengths of our diversity.
Who: Existing youth organizations and the government.
Resources: Children's Services.
Expected Outcomes: A greater understanding of and between people.

B9. That previous research studies which clearly demonstrate the profound impact the media has on children be presented to government.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Implement the Children's Filter in regards to media programming.
Develop a comprehensive target campaign which will warn about the negative impact of media on

children, e.g. the anti-smoking campaign.
Who: Alberta government - Alberta Health and Wellness.
Media - TV, radio, newspaper, magazines.
Expected Outcomes: Reduction in exposure to damaging media influence.
Encouraging a productive use of media.

B10. That within the next year, action will be taken to increase public awareness of poverty, in order to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Find out results of research and identify messages.
Unite service providers to speak on poverty with
one voice.
Involve media: T.V., radio, newspapers.
Involve students by speaking to other students and adults.
Put pressure on politicians: educate the opposition; have people contact their MLA or hire a public relations firm.
Who: Service providers.
People/groups like Poverty in Action.
Concerned citizens.
People in power.
Resources: Volunteers.
Government.
Private foundations/donors.
Expected Outcomes: People will want to help and take action, thus change will become easier.

B11. That public education will take place through the development of a comprehensive multi-media campaign.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: People living in poverty in collaboration with agency representatives who could support them in a constructive way.
Resources: Government and interested stakeholders.
Expected Outcomes: Lessening of stigma associated with poverty.

B12. That in the next year we will educate Albertans about what works and what doesn't work, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Form a joint Ministerial group commission for an independent review of poverty, its impacts, and what is effective in overcoming poverty.
Ensure that the report is publicly released and placed in the hands of a broad range of decision makers: children and family services authorities, health departments, justice departments, etc.
Joint ministers establish and implement a communication plan regarding effective action on poverty.
Who: Joint ministers.
Resources: Joint governments.
Estimated relatively low cost: $250,000 for joint commission, $100,000 for report distribution, low costs for implementation of report.
Expected Outcomes: Define effective actions to pursue and change bureaucratic culture.
Puts information in the hands of public and decision makers to change culture to support children who are living in poverty.
Educate of Albertans on poverty and poverty issues.

B13. That the media be invited to carry programming which reflects the reality of children in poverty.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: Government and media.
Resources: Redirection of existing resources.
Expected Outcomes: Increase in public knowledge; a true depiction of reality.

C. Involve Youth

Recommendations from the Forum

C1. That youth action committees be appointed, with honoraria, to give input to other regional authorities (e.g. schools, AADAC, regional health, Children's Services).

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Who: Children's Services ministry.
Resources: Government, parents, involved adults and authorities.
Expected Outcomes: Give children and youth a voice and some power.

C2. That Alberta youth be encouraged to express their opinions, ideas and

solutions to issues on substance abuse.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Youth forums, media interviews, youth talking to adults individually or in formal group settings.
Who: Media, youth, adults.
Resources: Media, corporate sponsors, and tax dollars.
Expected Outcomes: Youth will know they are contributing to reduced substance abuse. Improved self-esteem in the youth.

C3. That relative to substance abuse issues, Alberta media use positive youth experiences in their publications. The writings should include all youth regardless of race.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream][cf. Increase Awareness and Education, Address Aboriginal Issues]

Who: Media and youth.
Resources: Media, corporate sponsors (e.g. GAP), governments, parents, involved adults and authorities.
Expected Outcomes: Improved youth image in the community and the province as a whole.

C4. That support for the establishment of youth councils in all communities be achieved in the next year with the development of a guide to assist new youth councils.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: A task force of representation from existing youth councils, municipalities, and provincial government.
Resources: Municipal, provincial and corporate.
Expected Outcomes: Children will have an ear and a voice. They will be involved in positive experiences. They will initiate positive change in their communities. Adults will view youth in a more positive light. Youth will attain a more positive self-esteem and attitude.

C5. That at least 3 youth representatives be appointed to each of the 18 regional child and family authorities, school boards, youth justice committees, and any other board that makes decisions on behalf of children and youth.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Why: Meaningful youth involvement.
Who: Regional authorities to appoint youth; at least one youth should have/has/had previous

involvement in child welfare.
Resources: Regional authority boards.
Expected Outcomes: Youth will have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

C6. That a meaningful, formal Forum of Youth be created as an independent legislative body reporting to the Legislative Assembly.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Youth will be involved in structuring committee(s) and in the administration of the group – to initiate, organize and implement.
A mission statement must be established.
Evaluate impact of policies on youth/children before and after implementation.
Resources: Provincial government funding.
Expected Outcomes: Youth voices are heard.
Youth will be actively involved with legislation – directed to and effecting youth.
The government will be informed of systemic issues relating to youth.
Youth will be seen as full participants in society.
Positive attitudes and perceptions of youth will trickle down to society's values.

C7. That a youth gathering (forum) be held for youth and by youth, achieved in the next year.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Why: A youth gathering will build healthy two-way relationships between youth, government, families and communities.
Suggested Actions: A youth gathering will identify and share best practices and celebrate successes with other communities. The purpose will be to solicit opinions about learning from a larger youth sample group including those incarcerated, dealing with disabilities, or at major public forums. Ask children and youth for their input for their planning of programs: "What's right, what's wrong for youth?"
Who: Youths; schools and school councils; volunteer agencies; Family And Community Support Services/community centres; parents and care-givers, led by the Children's Services Ministry.
Resources: Government: federal, provincial and municipal. Government funds, work experience programs, volunteer training. There could be specific fundraisers or sponsors solicited from local business communities. Elicit a corporate sponsor to create an electronic bulletin board to post information.
Expected Outcomes: Improved attitudes, self-esteem, role models, lifestyles, opinions, stereotypes and adult opinions. What works for others can be seen quickly so as not to reinvent the wheel. Youth will feel heard. They will feel that what they say matters. They will learn to use the process

to their advantage. They will begin to see that their contributions will have values in the community. They will learn about power.

C8. The continuation of the children's forum, with more active, meaningful youth participation.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: A more diverse representation of youth and youth issues. Youth helping youth should be part of a larger support network.
Inclusion of youth on a community council for input and approach to schools, mental health authorities, physical health (hospitals), etc.
Encourage the participation (voice) of youth wherever their behavior, performance and accountability is at issue (through the home, school, government, health care, policy, community).
Reorganize service delivery to include an active youth component and participation.
Who: Government in collaboration with communities and agencies.
Organizing communities should ensure a diverse representation of youth and youth issues.
Provincial policy makers, school boards and Regional Health Authority policy makers.
Parents, youth, service delivery agencies, government and media.
Resources: They already exist – restructure! A question of openness, not finances.
Seek representation from marginalized groups and include in the invitation process.
An educational issue: opportunities for youth input already exist, they just need to be utilized and expanded. Train youth to participate in service delivery.
Expected Outcomes: Empowerment and buy-in by all concerned.
A sense of community, acceptance and belonging.
Youth become stakeholders.
Addressing of youth issues.
Youth voices will be heard and will influence decision making.
Adults will better understand youth issues.

D. Nurturing Healthy Beginnings – Early Intervention

Recommendations from the Forum

D1. That assessment techniques and prevention programs be implemented to assess and address risk factors that are related to drug abuse. Prevention and early intervention programs will be designed for parents to teach their children about substances and decision making.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Who: Health units, physicians, clergy, schools, TARRA, AADAC, DARE, PARTY, Government agencies and youth.
Resources: Government and corporate sector.
Expected Outcomes: Earlier detection of risk factors and measures to address them would enhance self-esteem and decision making at a latter age, which would lead to a reduction of substance abuse and use.

D2. That government commit to an early intervention focus in all service areas/ministries, and still maintain and build on existing early intervention programs.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Why: To ensure the availability of early intervention services for all children 0 –5 years, in order to promote and educate Albertans on the role of early intervention potential and cost savings.
Who: Government to provide leadership.
Resources, Fiscal: Provincial government, e.g. the Heritage Trust Fund.
Corporate sponsors.
Resources, Human: from existing service providers.
Expected Outcomes: Long term investment in healthier children and families.
Children will have greater success in school and in life.
Reduction of infants born with problems such as fetal alcohol syndrome.

D3. That within the next year, existing services will be maintained and additional resources will be committed to increasing early intervention and prevention programs.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Why: The needs of the whole child will be met, resulting in health, safety, learning.
Suggested Action: Assess existing services and programs, determine community needs and implement new or maintain/enhance existing early intervention and prevention programs and services for children and families.
Who: Partnerships at the community level e.g. schools, health unit, business, municipalities.
Resources: Partnerships as defined.
Expected Outcomes: Stop doing what isn't working; overlap will be reduced, agencies will stop pointing fingers and come together; start walking the talk, at the community level.
Continue existing benefits/services, building on "best practices."
Head Start, Success by 6, hot lunch and breakfast.
Consider always "Children's Filter" in decision-making.

D4. That:

- **Eligibility for day care subsidy and compliance be expanded;**
- **There be enforcement of minimum standards for day care;**
- **There be more Head Start Programs in more communities;**
- **Parental leave provisions be increased.**

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: Provincial Government, including Children's Services and Treasury and cooperation of other levels.
Community groups.
Resources: Public as well as private funding.
Human Resources and Employment.
Community Groups, such as Family And Community Support Services.
Expected Outcomes: Work those 1000 trillion synapses.
Increased potential for life long learning.
Better "start" for children.

D5. That more positions are made available for outreach counseling in the next year.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Who: Schools, AADAC, Children's Services, Health Authorities
Resources: Government and corporate sector.
Expected Outcomes: Individuals who will be well-versed and accessible for children, youth families and communities.
Children may have a connection to someone who cares.

D6. That single parents on social assistance be permitted to stay at home for a period of at least one year after the birth of a child in order to facilitate/promote healthy child development.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream][cf. Support Low-income Families]

Who: Department of Human Resources and Employment must revise policy; perhaps changes to federal programs as well.
Resources: Alberta Government social assistance programs; community agencies to provide support in the form of education and child development programs.
Expected Outcomes: Greater opportunity for parent-child bonding; development of child resiliency; earlier language/cognitive development as a foundation for learning in school.

D7. Promote and celebrate the integral role parents play in the learning of their children through the provision of voice and teamwork.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Actions:

1. Make school (parent) councils meaningful and empowered – well-communicated roles and responsibilities.
2. Engage parents in conversations about their child's learning, i.e. ensure parental input into how achievements are reported.
3. Promote/facilitate parent support groups/network.
4. Professional development activities for parents.
5. Change the school culture/atmosphere to be accepting of parents and where they are coming from/welcoming.
6. Events in the school which include all family members, i.e. theater productions, speakers, fun nights, which serve the whole family.

Who: School divisions, school administration with parents, school council, and community agencies.
Resources: For most Suggested Action, no additional resources are required, only a change of attitudes. Fiscal resources will come from school divisions, provincial government.
Expected Outcomes: Increased parental involvement.
Individual needs of kids are better met.
Parents' needs met.
Better parenting.
Develop leadership of school stakeholders.

E. Accelerate the Integration of Services for Children

Recommendations from the Forum

E1. That the provincial government give priority to the integration of its services to children, to ensure that all needs are addressed and met by a continuum of services.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Why: To avoid duplication of services, to more efficiently use existing resources.
Suggested Actions: Inter-ministerial discussions will take place on:
Who is doing what?
Who is funding what?

Is there duplication of services?
Have stakeholders been involved?
What is the communication mechanism?
Who would be responsible to monitor services?
Identify a successful model and learn from it (i.e. governance agreement in one of the regions).
Don't re-invent the wheel.
Identify one-year interim band-aids, e.g. address equitable funding.
Increase personnel in schools.
Identify common goals and allocate funding to achieve the desired results.
Create a process that enables organizations to plan together to access funding.
Develop incentives for joint planning; apply the Children's Filter e.g., funding, shared accountability and responsibility.
Develop a "best practices" document and share it with all agencies involving children.
Create a single point of access for the user, whether it is to get information or to access services.
Create one common application form to meet all needs.
Who: Start at the ministerial level. Involve communities and schools.
Resources: Provincial government, community agencies, possibly schools.
Expected Outcomes: Less children falling through
the cracks.

E2. That departmental collaboration be improved in the next year, resulting in each department head/director (Child Services, Youth Justice, Learning, Health, Human Resources) meeting together at the committee level, to catalogue their programs in order to demonstrate how each department works in collaboration with the community. They will also apply the "Children's Filter" to the functions of each of their programs.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: The process is to be facilitated by an independent facilitator/auditor who would review the information for authenticity. Results should then be shared with direct service providers to further verify.
Resources: All concerned ministries.
Expected Outcomes: Improved, more efficient services for children.

E3. That within the next year, an "Alberta road map" will be created to define roles and responsibilities among stakeholders involved in delivering services to children.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Action: Create a clear, long-term vision for Alberta children, youth and families that incorporates the strategic direction and participation off all its stakeholders.
The government will address and clearly communicate social policy and direction, ensuring that all needs are addressed in the policy.
Who: Hire outside consultant in conjunction with cooperation of all Alberta stakeholders.
Resources: Province (a great investment in Alberta's future).
Expected Outcomes: Stakeholders will have a clear, long term understanding and vision of Alberta's commitment to children, youth and families.
Will create a vehicle to build partnerships and seamless services.
Provide better delivery of services.
Children and youth will have input into long term direction.

E4. Identify an inventory of services and resources, and share successful programs.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Develop an evolving data base of programs; organizations and individuals are able to submit program info for inclusion.
Community showcase to continue as part of Children's Forum to advertise and promote programs.
Program data base to be available on web site to promote awareness and networking.
Facilitators to provide workshops across province to collect program information.
Newsletter for organizations/programs on data base to highlight initiatives and share ideas.
Who: Government will collect information on current programs.
Resources: Provincial government, assisted by community service agencies.
Expected Outcomes: Increased accessibility to programs and information which will lead to better service.
Increased support for families.

E5. That a regional-based implementation framework be developed in the next year, for the delivery of services to children.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Why: This framework would provide a structure to integrate and utilize the business plans of all government services providing services for children and families.
Who: All government departments, regional authorities and boards.
Resources: All government departments must contribute long-term sustainable funding for integrated service delivery for children and families.
Expected Outcomes: Service delivery changes will be made in the best interest of the child and his/her family.

Costly duplication will be avoided, and fragmentation of services and effort. Effectiveness will increase.
One-stop comprehensive services for children and families in need.

E6. That a civic community be developed where everyone has a voice, everyone is aware of the issues and we all work together to solve problems.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Education, promotion and awareness of children issues.
Educate about impact of children's issues: financial, social, educational.
Everyone has a role in solving these problems, therefore bring together in each community corporate interests, government, service providers, families.
Provide a voice for children by implementing children's forums like this one.
Minority Issues: develop and build a curriculum in schools starting at grade 1 regarding racism
Children's Filter: put child and family issues higher on the political agenda; all policy and funding decisions should be filtered through this lens.
Who: To be developed by the Alberta Children's Initiative and Alberta Community Development; assisted by communities at the local level, the United Way, youth advisory committees at all levels, all provincial and community policy makers, Alberta Learning, schools, Family And Community Support Services, Student Health Initiative, service providers.
Expected Outcomes: Children will be healthy and safe.

E7. Communities will meet and support the needs of children, youth and families through integrated service provision.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Actions:

1. Create community inventory of services available and who is delivering them.
2. Build on existing groups (those impacted) to develop common goals for children and families; or, create amalgamated groups with established common goals.
3. Integrate programming special to different population's needs.
4. Remove barriers, i.e. financial, transportation.
5. Remove stigmas attached to some programs and services.
6. Market to the community as a whole the diversity of programs available.
7. Create a forum where agencies and organizations who provide service can come together to share ideas/partner.
8. Share resources between agencies.
9. Breakdown territories among service providers.
10. Education and buy-in of funders to service providers' cooperative ventures.

11.Incorporate results of surveys into planning and programming.
Who: Collaboration among Family And Community Support Services, agencies, schools, community, service providers, other stakeholders.
Resources: Staff time, and minimal fiscal resources.
Expected Outcomes: More appropriate referrals through better identification of needs.
Parents would feel empowered to make choices/options for children, to meet identified needs.
Increased well-being of children.
Better service provision to communities.

E8. In the next year, agencies dealing with children's services will ensure ongoing, inclusive, clear communication.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Action 1: Each children's services authority will hold a community "Children's Forum."
Who: Children's services authorities, with local service providers and community members.
Suggested Action 2: A provincial newsletter/progress report to communicate outcomes, highlight success.
Who: Children's Services Ministry with Health, Education, Justice, Community Development.
Suggested Action 3: Training in listening skills and clear communication should be a part of all staff training and development.
Who: All staff development trainers.
Resources: Provincial ministries; local authorities and communities.
Expected Outcomes: Voices of children and youth will be heard, effectively. Knowledge and information will be shared regarding children's services. Communities will be better informed.
There will be better, perhaps increased, access to services.
Responsive service providers.

E9. That in the next year a provincial network will be created to do a thorough needs analysis/issue review for each community in the province.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Why: To provide for increased cooperation and shared responsibilities, accountability.
Who: Shared responsibility of service providers partnership, existing agencies/organizations; appropriate provincial government ministries.
Resources: Existing research departments in various agencies and partnerships.
Legislative issues: Existing resources.
Expected Outcomes: Clear snapshot of substance abuse issues in Alberta communities.
Share the information with all to develop programming and services.
Response from provincial government as to whether the boundaries of regional health authorities,

school boards, Children's Services, etc., can be aligned to meet community needs.
Shared initiatives across partnerships will identify an initiative that is collaborative between two or more Organizations/agencies/communities roles are clear, program or service will deliver more to more people.

F. Address Funding Issues

Recommendations from the Forum

F1. Long-term, Sustained Funding

F1.1. That committed, long-term funding be acquired from three levels of government and the private sector to fund human resource positions and programs to meet the needs of children.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: Three levels of government and private sector.
Resources: Three levels of government and private sector.
Expected Outcomes: By October 2000 there will be more personnel to develop programs to met the needs of children, and a reduction in crime and violence.

F1.2. That within the next year, agencies dealing with and funding services to children will be committed to sustained, long-term funding.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Why: This will better support the implementation of long-term plans, as the focus will turn away from short-term fundraising to the delivery of services to children.
Suggested Action: Stakeholders will meet to determine best practices, and to match funder/donor and service agency needs. Meeting should include national society of fundraising executive member who has knowledge of standards, ethics and best practices. Their task will be; and to understand the need for appropriate reporting.
Who: Provincial and community children's services agencies.
Resources: A cross-fertilized/cultural committee of stakeholders must address this issue. The Steering Committee will look at the initiatives proposed
Expected Outcomes: Lines of communications, resources and funds will move two ways.
Youth and corporations to meet the needs of both players.
Partnerships with corporate communities will be encouraged.

F1.3. That beginning in the next year, the province of Alberta will provide more

long-term core operational funds in the areas of prevention and intervention programs, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Establish a universal funding base for special needs children at birth.
Provide universal screening at 3-6 months gestation and at 1 month post-partum.
Engage in public awareness programs: drug and alcohol; nutrition; contraception. School nurses may play a lead role here.
Program service implementation: home visitors; clinic immunization; centre-based day programs such as child development and care, observation nursery, speech/language, etc.
Who: Provincial government: health, education, social services.
Resources: Provincial government: health, education, social services.
Expected Outcomes: Achievement of a 90 – 100% success rate in early identification of high-risk children.
Collective services would decrease the number of visits and would increase the effectiveness of services.
Developmental delays would be counteracted significantly before grade one, reducing later costs to government.

F1.4. That sustainable funding be provided for programs and services which demonstrate effectiveness in impacting children's health - mind, body, and soul.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream] [cf. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs, Accountability]

Suggested Actions: Thoroughly evaluate funding criteria and strategies.
Create a 3- to 5-year business plan for family-centered child health services.
For new program proposals, ensure specific and clear guidelines, appropriate evaluation and a practical plan for long-term sustainable funding.
Programs approved for funding should reflect the full spectrum of need.
Who: Alberta Health with delegates.
Alberta Health with regional health authorities, mental health boards, schools, school boards and family service agencies.
Consultative approach for process and sustainability.
Collaborative (2 way) decision making.
Resources: Collaborative, consultative involving all stakeholders and their budgets.
Expected Outcomes: Rationalization and integration of services across the full spectrum of health care needs.

Sustainable service delivery and programs children can rely on.
A rational cycle of planning.
Buy-in, participation and sharing of information for families.
A wider range of children's needs will be met.

F1.5. Develop new models of funding which ensure specific community and educational needs are addressed.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Actions:

1. Needs Survey (equitable).
2. Evaluate current practices and models.
3. Explore funding models from other locations.
4. Integration: investigate partnerships within ministries.
5. Assess whether current budget amounts are adequate.
6. Allocate according to needs/capacity building within communities.
7. Public input into development of definition of needs and criteria.
8. Fair and accurate procedures for identification for funding criteria.

Who: Task Force comprised of child and youth voices, MLAs, community representation and representation from ministries (staff).
Resources: Fiscal – joint government funding.
Human – from all stakeholders.
Other resources – administrative expertise – youth knowledge and skills, community expertise.
Expected Outcomes: Maximize a coordinated/integrated response for supporting children and youth.

F1.6. That the Children's Services Plans be implemented with sufficient funding.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Elect all members to the Children's Authorities within three years.
Increase funding to Children's Services.
Provide funding for a public awareness program.
Monitor Children's Services ministry for the implementation of the four pillars: community-based, early intervention and prevention, integrated services, Aboriginal services.
Who: Government will provide increased funding.
Expected Outcomes: More preventive and intervention services will in the long-term mean reduced costs for servicing. Then the government surplus can be used for Children's Services.
Implementing this will make a safer place for our children.

F2. Equitable Funding

F2.1. That within the next year, funding for programs be based on need, not on per capita criteria, especially for minorities, rural areas, and those with special needs.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Who: Each minister of the partnering ministries should take the time to see the difficulties of these groups.
Resources: Ministers of departments.
Access existing groups of parents and children, advocate and workers to hear from them (to listen).
May be a reallocation process. Perhaps we should look at examples from other governments/areas/counties with well-established "need-based" funding.
Expected Outcomes: These children will have a voice and therefore a first step will be taken towards having their needs met.
The children will be supported and helped at their level regardless of location and background.

F2.2. That rural communities have equitable opportunities for services and programs for youth and families.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Suggested Action: Listen to needs and concerns of youth; implement a youth council.
Who: Politicians, Family And Community Support Services, community leaders, school administrators, health authorities, regional children's authorities, Chambers of Commerce, RCMP, and other emergency services organizations, churches.

Suggested Action: Provide supports for teen parents to complete/further their education and access life skills, parenting information.
Who: Politicians, education, health, local housing authority, Family And Community Support Services.

Suggested Action: Provide child care/day care for farm families (longer hours, facilities).
Who: Family And Community Support Services, politicians, parents, emergency services, health units.

Suggested Action: Provide activity-based youth centres that cater to local youth interests (skateboard park, etc.).
Who: Politicians, recreation department, parents, RCMP.

Suggested Action: Provide walk-in confidential health services/counselling.
Who: Health unit, schools, parents.

Suggested Action: Ensure counselling/respite care is available for families of disabled children.
Who: Health unit, Family And Community Support Services.

Suggested Action: Alternative delivery methods for receiving elementary/junior and high school education.
Who: Parents, school, administration, politicians.
Resources: Provincial government, communities, municipalities.
Expected Outcomes: Rural communities will have equitable access to services in support of families and children.

F3. Funding Levels

F3.1. That adequate funding be obtained from public and private sectors in money, gifts-in-kind, employment opportunities, mentorship programs, role models, and sponsorship.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: Three levels of government and the private sector.
Resources: Public and private sectors.
Expected Outcomes: Promote self-esteem of children and families, productive part of the community.

F3.2. That funding for children's services be increased across the board.
[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Have an equitable allocation of funds; similar funding for similar services.
Non-profits should be all the same and mirror government on a community level.
Recognition of the professional skills of human service workers i.e. (classroom aides, child care workers).
Staff/parent educational development.
Funding so kids can be included (disabled kids, normal kids, and kids with different backgrounds and Aboriginal cultures).
Decrease turnover of staff; promote consistency and programs for children.
Institute DARE program from grades 5 to 12.
Make funding available to support the integration of community, family and schools i.e. outreach.

Develop a common funding request format and common outcomes measurements, regardless of funding sources (private, government, foundations, etc.). This can be done by senior level managers of funding groups, who could prepare these items in three days of time with hard work and willingness to work in a more connected way across sectors in the development of the common formats.
Who: Inter-ministerial initiative, provincial government.
Resources: Premier to give more money to each department.
Municipal and provincial governments.
Expected Outcomes: Long term committed staff, which benefits stability for children.
Kids will stay in school.
Parents augment the work of professional staff to promote life long learning.
Improved data collection within the same fiscal year.
Less time would be spent on bureaucratic requirements and therefore more time for direct service.
Resources would be used in more targeted and effective ways.

F3.3. That an increase in human and fiscal resources be made available to services for children.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Who: To be done by a partnership between the government, front line workers, community and consumers.
Suggested Actions:
1.Identify best practices nationally in regards to work load standards in order to determine benchmarks.
2. Develop standards (from #1 above) that would meet the needs and special needs, so that the wholistic health and well-being of the children could be maximized.
Note: revised standards should be:
Students and teachers ratio (class sizes);
Case load standards for social workers;
Access to the services (hours of availability).
3. Meet these standards by: recruiting and training a skilled work force; creating more child focused services and practices; and, retention of the trained work force.
Resources: Fiscal resources provided by governments, supplemented by community volunteers and consumers.
Expected Outcomes: More personalized instruction (lower teacher-student ratio).
Reduced isolation and alienation among children.
Increased motivation to achieve excellence.
With retention of workers there will be more consistent support services for children.
More immediate attention to children's crisis problems due to increased social workers, teachers,

etc.

G. Enhance the Role of Schools

Recommendations from the Forum

G1. That schools will be community focus centres and community learning centres.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Actions:

1. Maximize and encourage innovative ways to bring parents into school, i.e. laundromat, learn about computers.
2. Use the Schools beyond school hours; community use at little ($1.00) or no cost.
3. Co-locate with community agencies/services (space permitting), e.g. community library, day care, pre-school 0-6 years.
4. Employ a native liaison community worker.
5. Youth worker on buses, to help with homework, play games, resolve conflicts.
6. Liaise with other community organizations to extend and enrich extra-curricular opportunities available to kids, youth.
7. Provide access to training programs for parents to be an advocate for their child.

Who: Mental health organizations, Family And Community Support Services, Community Care, police, business (no multinational corporations), local nonprofit organizations, parents, children, school divisions, school administration, janitors, Child and Family Service Authorities, Family And Community Support Services, individuals (including youth and children) must be involved in any planning.

Resources: From existing allocations, to be reallocated to that centre. Some additional funds required (from school division, user pay, etc.), federal and provincial funds, Child and Family Service Authorities, Family and Community Support Services, community agencies.

Expected Outcomes: Sense of community.
One-stop shopping.
Quicker response time for families in need.
Greater access to knowledge/specialization/services.
Supply families with positive conflict resolution skills.
Safer, more positive home environment.
Good peer modeling.
Knowing a safe place.
Decreased stress.
Increased life skills.

Increased involvement of parents/community.
Increase in services for children and families.
Increased skills, and needs met.
Less opportunity and desire to act out on the part of children.

G2. That life skills awareness and prevention-based curriculum be implemented in the educational system in early childhood.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: Ministries of Health, Education and Justice (collaborative effort).
Human Resources Development Canada.
Contracted agencies (e.g. John Howard Society).
Communities.
Resources: Community partnerships with corporations.
Ministries.
Human Resources Development Canada.
Everyone involved: education professionals (teachers, etc.), Ministers of respective departments, parents, children, older youth who can identify needs in younger grades/programs, members of communities (professionals, etc.).
Other Resources: study areas in the country or world where there is a less risk of crime and violence (for whatever reasons).
Expected Outcomes: Children will be aware of the consequences involved in violence and crime and will be more informed about their decisions.
Children will also have the support of those around them.
Children will be safer because there will be more educated children that have the knowledge of preventing violence and crime.

G3. That schools offer educational programs to teach students to express and deal with anger and problems in positive, non-violent ways.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream][cf. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs, Create Alternatives in the Youth Justice System]

Who: Teachers spend most of their time with children; they would do this starting in kindergarten.
Not just teachers, but everyone should assist.
Parents (kids look up to their parents so they have to do this).
Youth influence youth, so they need to do it.
Media, e.g. cartoons that show different ways, better shows for kids.
Resources: Volunteers, government (Education, Children's Services, Health).
Adult role models in schools, communities.

Expected Outcomes: Children and youth learn to express anger in non-violent ways.

G4. That all neighborhood schools be responsible for meeting, within the school, the special/individual needs of all students in their catchment area.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Who: Neighbourhood schools, Alberta Learning, Family And Community Support Services, School Boards, community organizations, other government departments, parent volunteers.
Resources: Alberta Learning, school boards, school councils.
Expected Outcomes: Neighbourhood schools will be schools for all children in their neighbourhood.
Children will not have to leave their neighbourhood to go to school.
Parents will have a choice, but children cannot be rejected.
Schools will provide the linkage to community resources.

G5. That the School Act be changed so parents have the right to choose their child's educational placement within the Alberta public education system.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]
Who: Legislative Assembly.
Resources: Existing resources re-aligned or re-allocated.
Expected Outcomes: No placement appeals; resources that currently go into appeals and assessments would actually be available for the learning needs of students.
Families will be empowered; families would know their placement choices and options.
Children and families will experience less rejection.
Principals and administrators will become true partners with parents.

G6. That a full-time, full-day kindergarten program be provided for all Alberta children.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]
[cf. Nurturing Healthy Beginnings – Early Intervention]

Why: To ensure all children have access to early intervention, basic learning skills, pro-social skills in preparation for life long learning.
Who: School systems; private early childhood services operators; Alberta Learning.
Resources: Alberta Learning cost: approx. 30,000 students X 1,800 = $54,000,000.
Additional costs will be incurred for transportation.
Expected Outcomes: All children will have access to early intervention, basic learning skills, pro-social skills in preparation for life long learning.

G7. That an assessment be carried out to determine those schools most in need; and that a meal program be provided immediately for the children in these schools.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream][cf. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs, Support Low-income Families]

Who: This should be provided by Alberta Learning and Alberta Health, with a committee at the school level including students, staff, parents, school nurse, and community constables.
Resources: Health supplies funding/student fundraising/community/business resources.
Expected Outcomes: Healthy children who can learn effectively.

G8. That the provincial government mandate the development of comprehensive school health in all schools in Alberta.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Who: Commitment and endorsement from Ministers of Learning, Health and Wellness, Children's Services, Environment and Justice.
Local and regional service providers like schools, health regions, Child and Family Service Authorities, Alberta Mental Health Board and community agencies and volunteers, AADAC, police, parent councils, students and parents.
Resources: Injection of new annualized dollars based on a proposal from key partners (i.e. student health initiatives).
Commitment of current resources from partners.
Resources from special interest groups, such as ATRA, injury prevention and awareness center, lung association, AIDS organizations, parents, volunteers, service clubs, businesses, local government, Family And Community Support Services community.
Expected Outcomes: Active involvement in improving their health and school environment.
Kids have a voice in health issues to be targeted.
Improved learning by kids (e.g. nutrition).
Safer school (bullying, injuries, self-esteem).
Children will learn a sense of community as partners model cooperative efforts.

G9. That legislation be implemented to limit school class size, and the time students must spend on buses.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Actions:

1. Regular class size of K-3 should be limited to a maximum of 18 students.
2. Regular class size of 4-12 should be a maximum of 24 students.

3. Funding/providing resources for children with special needs; reduce class size by three mainstream students for each child with special needs unless the child/class has a teacher's assistant.
4. Students with attention deficit disorder/attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and fetal alcohol syndrome should be eligible for and receive severe disability funding as biological disabilities, through Alberta Learning.
5. Ensure that mild and moderate and severe funding goes directly to children with special needs.

Who: Colleen Klein is to take this information to the provincial government and strongly recommend these strategies.
Legislated by the provincial government.
Resources: Provincial government would provide necessary funds to ensure proper allocation of funds by school districts, and direct Alberta Learning to manage this.
Expected Outcomes: Children will have a higher quality learning experience.
Children with special needs will be identified more easily.
Children with special needs will be able to access remedial services more quickly.

G10. That an early intervention program be implemented in every school, staffed by paid, certified personnel.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream][cf. Nurturing Healthy Beginnings – Early Intervention]

Why: To ensure parenting programs are available in schools and communities.
Suggested Actions: Legislate global Head Start program; legislation to provide for space for Head Start program in all elementary schools.
Implement universal, extensive home visitation program for prenatal to six years.
Place a culturally sensitive Child Advocate in every school.
Who: Provincial government, school and health authorities.
Resources: Provincial government, school boards, communities.
Expected Outcomes: Children more school ready.
Reduced child abuse.
Decrease in crime.

G11. That all schools have skilled resource people to address the diversity of children's needs.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Suggested Action: Identify within each school someone willing to take on the role of coordinating services (counselling, physio, speech language therapist, etc.), to help create an inclusive environment.
Who: Schools, Alberta Learning, community service providers.

Resources: Need new funding, not to come out of school budget. This is not an add-on to a full teacher workload.
Expected Outcomes: More effective coordination of services for children with diverse needs. Children with diverse needs would feel more included.

G12. That core class specialization be implemented at the high school level.
[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Why: Students entering into high school would have the option, with parental consent, of which stream/focus of core classes they would enter into: humanities, math and science.
Students would have to take a minimum of two core classes.
Suggested Action: Examine the British model and find a Canadian solution – tailor it to student's needs.
Who: Provincial and/or federal government.
Resources: Curriculum Standards Branch of Alberta Learning could develop it with help from independent research. The funds that cover high school core classes would merely be reorganized to accommodate the new program.
Expected Outcomes: Class sizes will decrease as student body will be cut in half – 1/2 in sciences and 1/2 in humanities.
Students' averages will go up as they will only be in courses they can handle.
Attendance will go up because students won't be taking mandatory classes they can't comprehend.
Class learning won't be slowed by students who consistently don't understand or cause disruptions because of their boredom.
All learned knowledge will be applicable in the student's future career as this is the stream they decided to take.
Students will become more focused by focusing their studies.

G13. That there be mandated implementation of safe and caring schools; and that all schools have a safe school plan which includes environmental design, responding to crisis, and post-crisis intervention.
[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: Government in cooperation with the Alberta Teachers Association, boards and schools.
Resources: Government funding, schools, community, parents and police.
Expected Outcomes: A safe environment in which children can learn.

G14. That safe and caring schools be promoted.
[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Why: To ensure a safe learning environment through the help/support of resource officers and counsellors.
Suggested Actions:
1. All schools must initiate a safe, caring, respectful school culture. A safe school culture is embedded in a safe community culture.
2. All schools to have a school resource officer (peace officer) designated.
3. Counsellors in all schools.
4. All staff to have training in diversity/cultural sensitivity.

Who: Joint provincial/federal/municipal interdepartmental task force.
Resources, fiscal: Federal/prov/municipal funded – new funding, not a reallocation.
Resources, human: All stakeholders.
Expected Outcomes: Children will learn and live in civil communities; they will learn to be good citizens.
Improved relationships between police and youth.
Less vandalism in school and community.
Caring, learning environments which encourage intellectual risk taking and learning.

G15. That curriculum design be modified to celebrate individuality.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Why: To create a positive learning environment that is sensitive and acknowledges individual strengths.
Suggested Actions: Individual learning styles are acknowledged and incorporated into the instruction.
Include community representation when teaching multiculturalism, sexual orientation and special needs.
Options for family and students to achieve academic success; Aboriginal high school, home schooling, cyber schooling, outreach schooling, sports.
Training sessions in multiculturalism and inclusion for all professionals.
Adequate resources to provide flexible learning.
Who: Community, Schools, teachers, professionals, government and families.
Resources: Personal (creativity, respect and listening).
Expected Outcomes: Tolerance, acceptance and respect for each other and how special they are.
Understanding of classroom materials and each other.
Feeling of success for reaching potential.
Children will be motivated to learn and stay in school.

G16. That within the next year, additional costs for going to school be eliminated for all Alberta students.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream][cf. Address Funding Issues, Support Low-income Families]

Suggested Actions: School boards (provincial association) be directed to draw up a reasonable action plan to eliminate additional costs - based on individual students' developmental needs.
Alberta Learning to provide sufficient funding to implement the action plan.
Who: Alberta Learning, school boards, schools, parent councils.
Resources: Alberta Learning.
Expected Outcomes: More graduates/less drop-outs.
Parents have additional funds for basic needs, such as shelter and food.
Less competition for community funds.

G17. That within the next year, full, free funding for public and separate schools be provided to ensure that no school-related fees will be charged to Alberta students.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream][cf. Address Funding Issues, Support Low-income Families]

Suggested Action: Huge surpluses every budget year, therefore adequate dollars should be budgeted.
Who: Alberta Learning.
Resources: Alberta Learning.
Expected Outcomes: Increased educational opportunities.
Increased self-esteem.
Increased basic needs met as parents will not be expending funds on extra schools fees.
Every Alberta child will have an equal opportunity to achieve his/her dreams.

H. Stimulate Community-driven Initiatives

Recommendations from the Forum

H1. In the next year we will commit to using the "Children's Filter" at all levels and in all communities.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]
[cf. Integration of Services to Children]

Suggested Action: Create awareness of Children's Filter with clear understanding of concept.
Who: Government departments, regional authorities, health authorities, Family And Community Support Services, education, community, sports recreation, business.
Resources: Government, business, partnerships, people or organizations already using the Children's Filter model, children, youth.

Expected Outcomes: Services to children will be relevant to children.
More people/organizations will use the Children's Filter in their decision making.
More relevant use of funding.

H2. That within the next year, service delivery systems will be restructured to be more supportive, in order to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

H3. That a universal infant/family screening program be implemented in every community in Alberta to identify children/families in need of support.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Who: Team of people from Health, Children's Services with appropriate support (e.g. interpreters, cultural sensitivity).
Resources, Fiscal: Alberta government, Health Canada, regional authorities for health and child and family services.
Resources, Human: To develop/select/customize the screening tool, there will be a need for a multi-disciplinary team at the provincial level. Ongoing training of local people to use screening tool will also be needed, as well as an Information Management system to track children and families.
Expected Outcomes: Children and their families who need support will be identified at birth.

H4. In the next year holistic family resource centres will be established and supported.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Action: Family resources centres will be established in all communities.
Who: Ministries of Health, Education, Justice, Community Development, Children Services.
Regional management buy-in by school boards, municipalities.
Quality community developers – resource centre staff have high skills in relationship building.
Community access for all regardless of low income
cut-off, risk factors, etc.
Grass roots involvement, leadership all community member understand the principles.
Resources: All involved ministries to provide dollars.
Business/corporate community.
Wisdom, time, knowledge, goods, services from all community members.
Expected Outcomes: Social learning opportunities for children.
Community inclusion for youth.

Parent/family support and education.
One-stop shopping.
"Sense of community": kids are known, supported, cared-for, nurtured in all areas of well-being
Kids belong and are seen and treated as an asset.

H5. That a provincial 'safe and caring centre' be created to build consistency into safe and caring programs and services, and that each community have an inter-agency group to serve the same function at the local level.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: Children's Services, Learning, Health, Justice, Alberta Teacher's Association, families, Alberta Home and School Council Association, municipalities, businesses.
Resources: All partners and stakeholders.
Expected Outcomes: Consistent messages regarding behaviour, and the development of non-violent problem solving skills.
Reduction in the duplication of services.

H6. That high quality, meaningful recreation and leisure opportunities be established at the neighbourhood level to meet the daily developmental needs of children and families.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Who: Community animators/developers and natural helpers in communities.
Resources: Human/fiscal resources from strategic reallocation of municipal and provincial resources (no mega-recreation palaces; develop neighbourhood-accessible resources).
Allocation of new resources from federal, provincial and municipal governments.
Expected Outcomes: All children will have the opportunity to develop competence and self-esteem through leisure, recreation, and cultural experiences.

H7. That community-driven initiatives will be increased by:

- Sharing effective programs throughout the province by developing a list of those that work well;
- Providing facilitators and resources to support community-driven initiatives;
- Making community development a criteria for contracted service providers, and support community development with specific funding.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: Stakeholders and partners, i.e. ministries and authorities.
Resources: Children's Services, Family And Community Support Services.

Expected Outcomes: Increased safe and caring communities.
Increased empowerment for those who care for kids.
Increased efficiency and effectiveness of government money and services.

J. Address Aboriginal Issues

Recommendations from the Forum

J1. Place the focus on the Aboriginal pillar in the next year.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Action 1: Aboriginal teachers will be hired to work in the schools.
Suggested Action 2: Non-Aboriginal teachers will be trained in Aboriginal issues and cultural awareness.
Who: Ministry of Learning, Alberta Teachers Association, school boards, local communities, Aboriginal Elders.
Resources: Federal government, provincial government, school boards, communities.
Expected Outcomes: Role models for Aboriginal children will increase, drop-out rate will decrease, more Aboriginal children will become aware of their language and culture, their sense of identity will be regained.

J2. That government and community work together to promote greater education and awareness toward the goal of building on the strengths and relationships of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream][cf. Increase Awareness and Education]

Who: Schools, communities, families, and individuals.
Resources: A portion of education funds dedicated to cultural awareness in schools.
Government funding to support existing Aboriginal agencies (e.g. Native Friendship centres, Native counselling services) to further awareness in the community.
Alberta Justice to fund restorative justice programs.
Money to train people working with kids in cultural awareness.
Expected Outcomes: Greater community involvement.
Children will feel like they belong.
More of an understanding of each other.

J3. Create a cross-ministry approach to address issues faced by Aboriginal children and youth.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

K. Actively Lead in Health and Wellness Programs

Recommendations from the Forum

K1. Healthy Families

K1.1.Promote family wellness in order to reduce family violence.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Involve all in the action plan against family violence, as an interagency partnership.
Mandatory cultural/recreational and life skills programs and personal development that deals with the issues.
Who: Government, communities, corporations, educators, all people.
Resources: Government funding agencies – set aside funding for community programming and education.
Community leadership: front line workers and resources — identify the problem areas and budget and commit to community development in the community as a whole.
Include the wisdom of the elders.
Corporate citizens and business – Proactive wellness messages in advertising.
Public education system.
Cost sharing partnerships.
Expected Outcomes: Families will feel less tension, will be in loving environment, will be emotionally stable.
Increased self-esteem, confidence; families and children will feel accepted and supported Greater family unity.
Children will be family oriented, will feel valued, will feel heard, will feel greater self- worth, and will feel empowered.

K1.2.That a "Healthy Families Program" be introduced and implemented in Alberta, without stigma, in order to identify high risk families and to break the cycle of risks.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Consult with local communities to create a common vision of what is needed.
This process should be led by the Minister of Children's Services.
Survey of community and measure to evaluate where resources come from.
Implement program at the local level.

Who: All human services ministries and community representatives such as parents, schools, etc.
Resources: Dollars and staff from human services ministries.
New dollars for in home support workers for the at risk families.
Community volunteer fund raising.
Expected Outcomes: Fewer children in crisis situations.
Healthier families.
Safer environment.
Success for children and families.

K1.3.That the 'Hawaii Healthy Start' screening model be put in place and used in every community in Alberta.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream][cf. Stimulate Community-driven Initiatives]

Why: Funds spent here will reduce funds needed later.
Who: Health, Children's Services.
Resources: New government funding Human Resources – Health/Children's Services.
Expected Outcomes: The ability to provide early intervention is enhanced.
Quality of life for children in increased.
Children become more successful learners and members of society.

K1.4.That implementation of the Healthy Families Program model (Hawaii) be implemented in the next year.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: Community coalitions that use para-professionals and volunteers with professional support.
Resources: Government dollars, United Way, in-kind community contributions, volunteer time.
Expected Outcomes: Increased healthy births, school readiness, physical health and nutrition, emotional health, intellectual capacity and decrease in child abuse.

K1.5.That cost reductions through savings on long term beds be applied to primary prevention programs such as Health for Two, Healthy Families, Head Start, LOOK AT ME, parenting programs, etc.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: Justice Department.
Children's Services.
Police Services.
Communities.
Resources: Cost savings within the existing system.

Cause marketing with corporations.
Additional, long term investment by the two senior levels of government.
Philanthropic Foundations.
Volunteers in the community (but programs should not be based solely on volunteer commitment).
Expected Outcomes: Less children stigmatized through incarceration.
Increased self-esteem in youth.
More children being raised in a loving, structured and nurturing environment.
Safer neighborhoods for children and families.
Increased respect for children.
Reduced incarceration and prevention programs will contribute to healthier communities.

K1.6.Recognize, support and build stability for successful programs wherever they are.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Suggested Action: Assign a guide/advocate for every child/family who will provide guidance through the service system and make sure they are heard.
Who: Alberta Children's Initiative.
Resources: Joint responsibilities by service providers for creating this service.
Expected Outcomes: Children get services more quickly, in a friendlier fashion, no one gets lost, cuts through red tape, makes sure client is heard.

Suggested Action: Commit adequate long-term funding to successful community-based programs/initiatives.
Who: Provincial government.
Resources: Provincial government.
Expected Outcomes: Adequate funding.

Suggested Action: Adequacy of funding needs to be reviewed annually.
Who: Provincial ministries with local authorities.
Resources: Provincial government.
Expected Outcomes: Adequate funding.

Suggested Action: Make prevention, promotion and early intervention a priority by protecting the funding required.
Who: Provincial government.
Resources: Provincial government.
Expected Outcomes: Stabilization of resource for children and families, programs will be there when children need them.

Children can access program without long waiting lists.
More supports will be available for children across the province.

K2. Mental Health

K2.1 That comprehensive, accessible mental health services for children be provided.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Bring more child psychiatrists into the province.
Have mental health services in school. These would supplement and augment school counseling services.
Ensure all services are provided by qualified professionals (i.e. members of professional associations).
Who: A cooperative venture between government, universities and professional associations.
Resources: New government funding that is long-term and secure.
Reallocation from criminal justice system.
Expected Outcomes: Proper diagnosis and treatment of mental health problems.
Increased opportunity for youth to benefit from education.
Less youth in the criminal justice system .

K3. Sexual Health

K3.1.We recommend:

- That the current sexual health curriculum be revised to include diversity (i.e. sexual orientation, disabilities), alternatives to intercourse, and removal of the abstinence-based system
- That health education for parents and professionals (i.e. doctors, counselors, teachers) include diversity education/acceptance education. This could be in the form of a provincial sexual health conference
- That a larger focus be placed on prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and teen pregnancy
- That a larger focus be placed on the fact of being sexual beings from birth until death
- That there be increased availability of protection/prevention devices (condoms, dental dams, rubber gloves, birth control devices)
- That the cost of birth control and sexually transmitted disease prevention devices be decreased.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Who: Alberta Health, Health Canada, school divisions, drug stores (for cheaper costs of medical devices), local AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs), parents, youth.

Resources:

Information Resources

- Local Aids Service Organizations
- Local clinics
- Family And Community Support Services
- Family planning
- Health Canada
- Alberta Health
- Regional Sexual Health Authority

Monetary Resources

- Alberta Health Care
- Condom/prevention devices supply companies

Developmental Resources

- Youth
- Parents
- Teachers
- Aids Service Organizations
- Family Planning

Expected Outcomes: By developing a comprehensive approach to sexual health education, youth will be less likely to engage in risky sexual activity, thereby decreasing the risk of sexually transmitted disease transmission and teen pregnancy.

All youth have the right to feel comfortable with their sexuality.

K4. Nutrition

K4.1. That within the next year, lunch programs will be implemented in schools, with training and nutritional information, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: School officials must first recognize and acknowledge there is a need.

Achieve funding from government/community and pursue matching funding to provide service.

Develop the program and train parents/personnel/volunteers to operate and co-ordinate the program.

Open program to children regardless of culture or financial status.

Allow parents and children to take ownership of the program by contributing to the cost, e.g. 25 cents or donation (if they are able) or volunteer hours to ensure the program's success.

Who: Existing programs within the community, working with the schools.

Resources: Untapped resource from government, corporate and private sector.

Expected Outcomes: Learning and attendance will increase.
Sickness and absenteeism will decrease.
Parents and children working together will strengthen.
Cycle will be broken with the instruction and hands-on experience, both with parents and children.
Health care system will benefit in the long term.

K4.2.That every child have access to a daily nutritional lunch at school.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: Collaborative efforts by government, community, schools.
Resources: Government, communities, business, etc.
Expected Outcomes: Children will be assured of at least a third of their basic need for food being met.
Less hunger for needy children.

K4.3.That province-wide school/community lunch/food programs be implemented.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Consult with provincial service providers and stakeholders.
(Alberta Learning; Alberta Health; Churches) to determine gaps/needs.
Allocate sustainable funding directly to the program.
Seek creative solutions to empower people regarding life skills.
Evaluate and assess food programs.
Who: Lead department will be Children's Services
Resources: Funding from provincial coffers.
Expected Outcomes: Begin the process to determine how much funding is required, how to distribute food and how to implement direct food service.
Children will receive food, will not be hungry at school.

K4.4.That the basic needs of each child be met, in terms of hunger and a home.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Raise Supports For Independence rates 30% for food and shelter allowance and basic necessities.
Replace the recreational allowance for each child on this program.
Allow mothers to stay home 2 years with their babies.
Increase minimum wage for working poor.
Supply adequate housing for all families.

Ensure quality, affordable and accessible child care.
Who: Ministry of Human Resources.
Ministry of Labor.
Ministry of Children's Services.
Expected Outcomes: Children will be healthier.
Children will be off the street.
Children will be fed.
Children will have a more comfortable and secure life.

K5. Prevention Initiatives

K5.1. That in the next year prevention initiatives will be increased/enhanced to effectively address the impact of substance abuse on children in Alberta.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Research what is appropriate and what works for different age groups in different populations.
Who: An enhanced AADAC, and shared experience of other service partnerships, in collaboration with the target groups and communities; those groups to take the initiative and responsibility for research and dissemination and then:

- identify those specific groups that will be targeted i.e. parents who abuse substances
- determine if there is an existing program available, and if not, develop one.

Resources: AADAC and the related service partners.
Expected Outcomes: There will be more specific and appropriate prevention programs which will increase the wellness of families and children.
Sharing of all information with all stakeholders
in the province to develop programming and
services.

K5.2. That free, accessible and efficient services and treatment programs be established which effectively implement programs that target the impact of substance abuse on Alberta youth.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Suggested Action: Examine and revise restrictions on funding for youth programming.
Who: Ministry of children's services in conjunction with Regional Health Authorities, Family And Community Support Services, local recreation boards, school boards, local governments, AADAC, etc.
Resources: Government funding all ready in place.

Expected Outcomes: Money will be used more appropriately and more children will benefit from the programs.

Suggested Action: Bring treatment and services to the children in need instead of moving children to the facilities.
Suggested Action: Establish a best practices newsletter.
Who: Talk to the RCMP about theirs check for other on-line services already doing this ie action for health.
Resources: Organize groups, talk to AADAC FCSS and police about getting information.
And ask them to partner to help set up the newsletter, decide who will write it.
Expected Outcomes: information on programs that can be utilized and new ideas acted on
Suggested Action: Establish a youth task force.
Who: Talk to Mrs Klein and Minister Evans about youth Task Force and make sure they call you back.
Resources: Go to your community, Family and Community Support Services, school youth out reach center, contact other schools, get a committee going.
Expected Outcomes: Alberta will hear from youth and work with them.

Suggested Action: Establish a youth hotline.
Who: The youth and or parents should go to school and ask the youth council, police and Family and Community Support Services in their community to support the implementation of a substance abuse provincial hotline.
Resources: Create a committee to lobby government, as well as other schools and youth organizations, to support the program. Inexpensive program run by volunteers or paid people; it doesn't take much to fund a phone.
Expected Outcomes: A place for youth in trouble to make first contact, less likely to miss assistance, lower costs for intervention and care.

Suggested Action: Presentations for children.
Who: Establish a network of effective guest speakers with a past history that is motivational, that can relate to youth.
Resources: Contact police officers, AADAC, DARE
and get feedback from kids, gather list of qualifying speakers.
Expected Outcomes: Children will be more informed and interested in this area therefore the truth about substance abuse may be heard by those who will not otherwise hear it.

K5.3. That in the next year legislation be established which defines substance abuse, including alcohol, street drugs prescription drugs, tobacco, solvents, etc.

[from the Substance Abuse discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Identify specific problem areas as they pertain to children, youth, and families.
Review current legislation, pass appropriate legislation, including penalties.
Who: Provincial government and appropriate partners and stakeholders.
Resources: Provincial government.
Expected Outcomes: Less low birth weight children, fewer FAS/FAE children, healthier families, lower health care costs, safer environment for kids, less family violence, more awareness of substance abuse, more positive behavior, fewer kids in juvenile judicial system.

L. Create Alternatives in the Youth Justice System

Recommendations from the Forum

L1. That corporal punishment be banned and replaced with non-violent discipline techniques.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Government should amend legislation to ban corporal punishment.
Government/communities to sponsor educational facilities for parents and youth and students.
Who: Provincial government to create or amend legislation.
Everyone should take part, get help, report abuses to Child Welfare.
Child Welfare should investigate all reports of physical discipline and teach alternate parenting techniques.
Resources: Some volunteer, but programs should not rely solely on volunteer staffing.
Provincial government funding through Children's Services.
Expected Outcomes: Children would never be hit/physically disciplined by parents, teachers, care-givers or each other.

L2. That the justice system rely less on youth incarceration as a means to solve crime and violence, in favor of alternative options such as Healing and Sentencing Circles, Alternative Measures, Community Mediation, etc.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

L3. That certain minor youth offences be decriminalized.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

L4. That, within the next year, diversional justice programs receive more

resources for social services provided to youth.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Why: Deeper family, child welfare and socio-economic issues are often explored for relevance in youth offence motivation.
Who: A collaboration of existing transformative justice programs.
Resources: Alberta Justice dollars saved from court diversion.
Expected Outcomes: Identification of fetal alcohol syndrome and victims of abuse and neglect as major contributing factors in youth crime.
Allows for more humane rehabilitation of offenders and victims rather then punitive justice.

M. Support Low-income Families

Recommendations from the Forum

M1. Housing

M1.1. That in the next year there will be an improvement in shelter costs, supply and conditions, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Implementation of a portable subsidy program for families for whom no subsidized housing units are available, e.g. where rent for modest accommodation exceeds 35% of net income.
Restore funding to co-operative housing efforts (federal/provincial).
Establish rent controls.
Tie Supports For Independence accommodation allowances to actual community costs.
Increase of subsidized housing units.
Where appropriate, make Supports For Independence payments payable to third parties (utility companies and landlords).
Who: Subsidy program would need to be province wide and provincially funded, coordinated through municipalities. Local municipalities would enact and monitor rent controls using provincial criteria. Subsidized housing would best be addressed through federal/provincial/municipal contributions or agreements.
Expected Outcomes: Affordable housing of acceptable quality will result in more family funds being available to meet nutritional and social needs of children.
Increased stability for families and neighbourhoods (fewer moves).

M1.2.That an investment be made in affordable housing for low-income families.
[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Include community user participation in the plan.
Develop community co-op housing authorities to build and maintain units.
Establish as a priority single or duplex units rather than large housing units.
Implement a guaranteed and accessible rent-deposit plan.
Extend legal aid for tenants who experience housing issue or problems.
Tighten the regulations in regard to derelict housing and slum landlords.
Bring the three levels of government together to devise a plan for affordable housing.
Who: Community user groups should be formed. These groups will organize community meetings about the issue; and, will demand representatives at a high level from the three levels of government to come together to plan.
The provincial government will finance the working groups to participate.
Resources: The provincial government will finance beginning steps.
Expected Outcomes: Children and families will have adequate housing and not use food money, etc. for housing.
Self-esteem of children will increase.
The stability will help decrease health costs (warm, dry houses contribute to good health). This will also contribute to educational learning as children are in a safe environment. The children and families will have a greater pride in their homes.

M1.3.That safe, adequate and affordable housing be provided by:
- Increasing the number of subsidies available to low income families;
- Providing damage deposits for those on public assistance;
- Developing a plan for long-term housing needs.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: Human Resources and Employment. The individual workers ensure it happens.
Resources: Human Resources and Employment.
Expected Outcomes: Increased safety.
Increased health.
Increased security.

M2. Child Care

M2.1.That in the next year, child care subsidies will be available universally to all children aged 0-12, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Increase all social assistance programs to rates equal to the true cost of living.
Who: Supports For Independence workers, the province.
Resources: Tax base.
Expected Outcomes: Health, welfare, basic needs will be met.

M2.2. That funding for universal day care should be achieved in the next year, and the raising of minimum standards for day care should be achieved in the next year.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: Provincial government, a coalition of Children's Services, day care providers, parents.
Resources: Provincial government through Children's Services.
Expected Outcomes: Increased school readiness.
Increased physical and emotional health: better nutrition, better coping skills, sense of security, caring adult.
Early identification and treatment of problems.

M2.3. That in the next year, child care opportunities and subsidies will be increased.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Change the age for child care subsidies will be changed to 12 years.
More child care services made available to accommodate irregular working hours, for all families in Alberta.
Who: Provincial government.
Resources: A continuation/expansion of the existing pre-school subsidies.
Expected Outcomes: No latch-key kids.
Kids are safe.
Positive learning environment.
Safe and caring provincial government for all Albertan children.

M3. Recreation and Culture

M3.1. That in the next year, affordable or subsidized recreation and after-school programs will be offered to children and parents, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Partnerships between agencies, e.g. education, health, justice, mental health, in order to develop, fund, and deliver recreational programs.
Establish a fund for children and families to access for fees, equipment, training, etc. for recreational activities (government, business and public could contribute).
Establish after school programs for mentoring/tutoring for kids.
Who: All Albertans.
Leaders of agencies or departments should focus on working together, not protect their turf.
Government, business, and individuals work together for the common goal.
Resources: Government, individuals, and business all have to contribute for this to work.
Funding should be made available for program coordinators.
Expected Outcomes: All children will have access to recreational activities.
Safe environment will be available.

M3.2.That within the next year:

- Free recreational/cultural programs for children and youth be provided;
- Municipalities/towns/counties hire youth workers to provide programming and support for these programs;
- Cost will not be a barrier to participation in public programs and facilities.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: Contributions would come from all government departments who are involved with children.
Resources: Assistance and support will come from the collaboration of community agencies and groups.
Expected Outcomes: Access to free recreation/cultural programming for children.
Children will be involved in the planning of activities.
Less idle time for youth, resulting in a reduction in crime/vandalism/drug and alcohol abuse.
Increased self-esteem on the part of children and youth.

M4. Supports for Independence

M4.1.That the Supports For Independence shelter allowance must meet the cost of food and other basic needs. The Supports For Independence allowance should include money for school fees, damage deposits, bus passes, etc.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.2.That the Supports For Independence rates and accessibility be increased for youth.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

M4.3.That a government/community resource group be established to review Supports For Independence policy, regulations and the appeal process.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: A transparent process should include
Department of Human Resources and Employment, Department of Children's Services, community bodies such as: Edmonton Social Planning Council, Poverty in Action, Quality of Life Commission, etc.
Resources: Part federal government (Canada Health and Social Transfer), part provincial government, e.g. Child Tax Benefit.
Expected Outcomes: Decreased depth of poverty for children.

M4.4.That age-appropriate income supports be provided for youth at risk.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Create a method of supporting youth-at-risk outside of student finance, i.e. youth rather than adult-directed.
Make Child Welfare equal to Student Finance support.
Grant increased independence to youth as they demonstrate increased ability to handle adult responsibility.
Relate delivery of support (i.e. the method, not the amount) to ability to handle it.
Who: Youth Connections (Edmonton) or like agencies elsewhere.
Resources: A reallocation of funds from Student Finance and Child Welfare. This program will likely require more counsellors who will track and coach youth more intensively.
Expected Outcomes: Youth will be supported in becoming more self-reliant and responsible.
Less abuse of Student Finance.
Higher achievement and success for students.

M4.5.That in the next year, income for low-income families will be increased.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions:

1. Establish a task force to lead and implement a system-wide approach to increasing incomes.
2. The task force will:

- assess current situation
- examine options to:
- increase supply of funds to families/individuals
- reduce costs to families

- transfer responsibility for some costs to employers

Examples of some options:

- increase Supports For Independence rates to reflect actual living costs
- eliminate Health Care Insurance premiums
- expand Child Health Benefit to cover low income adults
- raise minimum wage
- Child tax benefits to those on Supports For Independence

Who: Led jointly by Children's Services Department and Human Resources and Employment.
Task force to include community representatives, federal government, business community, special interest groups, etc.
Resources: Funding will depend on options chosen and will come from governments and business.
Expected Outcomes: Increased incomes for lowest socio-economic groups.
Healthier, safer children doing well in school.
Reduced stress on families.

M4.6. That in the next year, benefits will increase comparable to the cost of living in communities, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Determine what the realistic cost of living is in different areas (affordable housing, healthy diet, health care, etc.)
Ensure that individuals receiving social benefits can maintain a realistic standard of living in the area in which they live.
Provide subsidies for low-income individuals based on income or based on income of previous taxable year. There should be no application, but rather should be automatic, like a working family tax benefit.
Homeless to have a place or agency that can receive benefit cheques and/or mail.
Where possible, cash pay-outs for individuals without bank accounts (currently no fixed address = no bank account = no assistance – a vicious cycle.)
Who: Federal/provincial governments.
Provincial Department of Human Resources and Employment.
Resources: Taxes (excluding low income).
Money saved from having to operate inefficient system.
Expected Outcomes: Healthier, happier, well adjusted children.
No consequences of poverty.

M4.7. That in the next year, more money will be put in the hands of needy Albertans to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Increase all social assistance programs to rates equal to the true cost of living.
Who: Supports For Independence workers, the province.
Resources: Tax base.
Expected Outcomes: Health, welfare, basic needs will be met.

M4.8.That anyone living below the low -income cut-off thresholds (working poor) should be entitled to free dental, medical, and optical benefits.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: Province, Federal government, and all professionals/supervised students.
Resources: Tobacco, alcohol, oil and gas tax revenues.
Expected Outcomes: Preventative measures – children will have great smiles, will be healthy, will be able to see and learn better.

M4.9.That anyone making minimum wage should not be required to pay taxes.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: Federal and provincial governments (not a real cost; foregone tax revenues only).
Resources: Opportunity cost (not a real cost to government).
Expected Outcomes: Shelter, food, clothes for families who have a few more dollars.

M4.10. That the government re-prioritize spending to eliminate family poverty by changing, for example, the debt reduction act to require 75% of any surplus to be reinvested into social programs and supports.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Who: Legislative Assembly.
Resources: Existing re-allocation of spending and future surpluses.
Expected Outcomes: Children will be clothed, fed, housed, cared-for.
Children will be better able to learn.
Families will be able to raise children at home.
Family stress and mental health will be improved.
Children and families will be healthier.

N. Improve Advocacy for Children-in-care

Recommendations from the Forum

N1. That implementation of a province-wide citizen review board for children-in-care should be achieved in the next year.

[from the Violence, Crime & Safety discussion stream]

Who: Spearheaded by Ministry of Children's Services and contracted out to an objective qualified party to administer the review.
Resources: Although citizen review is voluntary, funding would come from the province.
Expected Outcomes: Accountability to community for vulnerable children.
Children don't get lost in the system.
Developmental problems identified early for treatment.
Ensures quality foster care.
Timely implementation of case plans.

N2. That stability for child welfare children be ensured.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Suggested Actions: Select an MLA (not the minister) to champion the cause.
Establish a task force by January 30, 2000, consisting of 10 people knowledgeable about children-in-care, e.g. youth 2 representatives, foster parents 4 representatives, child welfare 2 representatives, Aboriginal 2 representatives.
Meet monthly to formulate:

- Policy
- Legislation
- Protocols

MLA to draft and present private member's bill.
Legislation passed to promote permanency for the youth in care including transition to adulthood.
Who: MLA, volunteer committee, youth, legislative assembly.
Resources: Task force/assistant costs to be 50% from education and 50% child welfare.
Expected Outcomes: Stability in the lives of children-in-care.
Higher learning capacity.
The cycle of welfare/home/move/welfare/home/etc. would be broken.
Someone who the children could hold accountable for neglect, abuse, or poor decisions.

N3. That the government change the legislation to make the Children's Advocate accountable to the Alberta legislature, not just the Minister of Children's Services. And, that the review of the mandate of the Children's Advocate be continued.

[from the Poverty and Physical Needs discussion stream]

Who: Legislative Assembly.
Resources: Provincial government.
Expected Outcomes: Better advocacy for children.

N4. Create a children's advocate who will speak for all children. (Maintain current office and funding of current child welfare advocate but create another advocate for all children.)

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Who: Provincial government and community collaboration.
Youth involvement in hiring and creating the job description for the office.
Resources: Government and Community.
Expected Outcomes: All children's voices will be heard, and their rights respected.

P. Measuring Progress and Success

Recommendations from the Forum

P.1. Improve accountability.

[from the Families, Learning & Community discussion stream]

Why: Collaboration and open accountability will support standards and outcomes, evaluations, ministries, associations, stakeholders, agencies, and children.
Suggested Actions: Expectation of and support for monitoring and evaluation of child, family, community programs.
Development and adoption of standards of practice/level of care re: training, ethics, user involvement, etc. Accreditation or certification must be received in order to continue practice i.e. program delivery.
Children's Services contracts with service providers will be amended to flexibly meet outcomes; three to five year contracts are suggested.
Move away from employer/employee relationships; rather, relate dollars to outcomes in Children and Family Service Authority funding formula.
Who: Agreement between ministry stakeholders on nature of standards and what info we need to determine good criteria/programs.
Lead ministry - Children's Services must review its endeavors in this area.
Ownership must be taken by lead ministry of its integral role in ensuring high level of care for all children.
Consultation must occur with other ministries, associations, agencies, authorities to decide on what

information is needed about practice and outcomes.
Resources: Government has this information, and must take the lead role in funding.
Expected Outcomes: Reduction in abuse by care-givers.
Better levels of care.
We will know what works and why.
More children and families will be healthy.

P.2. That standard measures be established and used to evaluate program effectiveness.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

P.3. That delivered programs and services are research-based and demonstrate effectiveness.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

P.4. That sustainable funding be based on demonstrated effectiveness of program delivery.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

P.5. That all current children's programs and services be evaluated, and reallocate funding to those that demonstrate effectiveness.

[from the Health – Mind, Body & Soul discussion stream]

Who: Provincial government in collaboration with individuals in need, acknowledged experts, and local program delivery personnel.
Resources: Provincial government departments of Health, Justice, Social Services and Education.
Establish a "children's fund" specifically targeted to children and their success.
Expected Outcomes: Quality, evidence-based services with outcome measures which demonstrate effectiveness.
Establishes accountability to children.
Money will be spent wisely to benefit children's success.
A long-term investment.

Appendix 2

SUMMARY LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS ORGANIZED BY DISCUSSION GROUP STREAM

This Summary List of Recommendations Organized by Discussion Group Stream is included here to assist readers familiar with the five discussion group streams used at the Forum.

Health – Mind, Body and Soul

Recommendations:

1. That on the opening of the legislature in [the spring of 2000*], the Premier and the Minister of Children's Services commit to the principles contained in the Alberta Children's Initiative, thereby making it the initiative for that sitting. [*original wording was "November 1999" and changed only because this report had not been completed at that time]

2. That the government make a commitment to the principle of using the "Children's Filter", recognizing diversity, in all policy making, legislation and decision making.

3. That all the recommendations from the Children's Forum be implemented in the next year.

4. That previous research studies which clearly demonstrate the profound impact the media has on children be presented to government.

5. The continuation of the children's forum, with more active, meaningful youth participation.

6. Identify an inventory of services and resources, and share successful programs.

7. That a civic community be developed where everyone has a voice, everyone is aware of the issues and we all work together to solve problems.

8. That sustainable funding be provided for programs and services which demonstrate effectiveness in impacting children's health - mind, body, and soul.

9. That within the next year, funding for programs be based on need, not on per capita criteria, especially for minorities, rural areas, and those with special needs.

10. That rural communities have equitable opportunities for services and programs for youth and families.

11. That an increase in human and fiscal resources be made available to services for children.

12. That the provincial government mandate the development of comprehensive school health in all schools in Alberta.

13. That all schools have skilled resource people to address the diversity of children's needs.

14. That a "Healthy Families Program" be introduced and implemented in Alberta, without stigma, in order to identify high risk families and to break the cycle of risks.

15. Recognize, support and build stability for successful programs wherever they are.

16. We recommend:

- That the current sexual health curriculum be revised to include diversity (i.e. sexual orientation, disabilities), alternatives to intercourse, and removal of the abstinence-based system
- That health education for parents and professionals (i.e. doctors, counselors, teachers) include diversity education/acceptance education. This could be in the form of a provincial sexual health conference
- That a larger focus be placed on prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and teen pregnancy
- That a larger focus be placed on the fact of being sexual beings from birth until death
- That there be increased availability of protection/prevention devices (condoms, dental dams, rubber gloves, birth control devices)
- That the cost of birth control and sexually transmitted disease prevention devices be decreased

17. That the basic needs of each child be met, in terms of hunger and a home.

18. That standard measures be established and used to evaluate program effectiveness.

19. That delivered programs and services are research-based and demonstrate effectiveness.

20. That sustainable funding be based on demonstrated effectiveness of program delivery.

21. That all current children's programs and services be evaluated, and reallocate funding to those that demonstrate effectiveness.

Poverty and Physical Needs

Recommendations:

1. That government departments and agencies review their business plans and policies through the "Children's Filter".

2. That all professionals and service providers adopt a customer service policy and an attitude of respect for individuals and families.

3. That governments take action to deal with child poverty.

4. That within the next year, action will be taken to increase public awareness of poverty, in order to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

5. That public education will take place through the development of a comprehensive multi-media campaign.

6. That in the next year we will educate Albertans about what works and what doesn't work, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

7. That the media be invited to carry programming which reflects the reality of children in poverty.

8. That:
- Eligibility for day care subsidy and compliance be expanded

- There be enforcement of minimum standards for day care
- There be more Head Start Programs in more communities
- Parental leave provisions be increased

9. That departmental collaboration be improved in the next year, resulting in each department head/director (Child Services, Youth Justice, Learning, Health, Human Resources) meeting together at the committee level, to catalogue their programs in order to demonstrate how each department works in collaboration with the community. They will also apply the "Children's Filter" to the functions of each of their programs.

10. That beginning in the next year, the province of Alberta will provide more long-term core

operational funds in the areas of prevention and intervention programs, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

11. That the Children's Services Plans be implemented with sufficient funding.

12. That within the next year, additional costs for going to school be eliminated for all Alberta students.

13. That within the next year, full, free funding for public and separate schools be provided to ensure that no school-related fees will be charged to Alberta students.

14. That within the next year, service delivery systems will be restructured to be more supportive, in order to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

15. That community-driven initiatives will be increased by:

- Sharing effective programs throughout the province by developing a list of those that work well
- Providing facilitators and resources to support community-driven initiatives
- Making community development a criterion for contracted service providers, and support community development with specific funding

16. That in the next year, child maintenance and tenant laws will be made more accessible and effective, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

17. That the government change the legislation to make the Children's Advocate accountable to the Alberta legislature, not just the Minister of Children's Services. And, that the review of the mandate of the Children's Advocate be continued.

18. That comprehensive, accessible mental health services for children be provided.

19. That within the next year, lunch programs will be implemented in schools, with training and nutritional information, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

20. That every child have access to a daily nutritional lunch at school.

21. That province-wide school/community lunch/food programs be implemented.

22. That in the next year there will be an improvement in shelter costs, supply and conditions, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

23. That an investment be made in affordable housing for low-income families.

24. That safe, adequate and affordable housing be provided by:
- Increasing the number of subsidies available to low income families
- Providing damage deposits for those on public assistance
- Developing a plan for long-term housing needs

25. That in the next year, child care subsidies will be available universally to all children aged 0-12, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

26. That in the next year, child care opportunities and subsidies will be increased.

27. That in the next year, affordable or subsidized recreation and after-school programs will be offered to children and parents, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

28. That within the next year:
- Free recreational/cultural programs for children and youth be provided
- Municipalities/towns/counties hire youth workers to provide programming and support for these programs
- Cost will not be a barrier to participation in public programs and facilities

29. That the Supports For Independence shelter allowance must meet the cost of food and other basic needs. The Supports For Independence allowance should include money for school fees, damage deposits, bus passes, etc.

30. That the Supports For Independence rates and accessibility be increased for youth.

31. That a government/community resource group be established to review Supports For Independence policy, regulations and the appeal process.

32. That age-appropriate income supports be provided for youth at risk.

33. That in the next year, income for low-income families will be increased.

34. That in the next year, benefits will increase comparable to the cost of living in communities, to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

35. That in the next year, more money will be put in the hands of needy Albertans to effectively address the impact of poverty on children in Alberta.

36. That anyone living below the low-income cut-off thresholds (working poor) should be entitled to free dental, medical and optical benefits.

37. That anyone making minimum wage should not be required to pay taxes.

38. Create a cross-ministry approach to address issues faced by Aboriginal children and youth.

Substance Abuse

Recommendations:

1. That a public awareness campaign be mounted in the next year which will promote random acts of kindness, listening to and understanding of each other.

2. That information in the next year be disseminated through newsletters, trade shows, open forums, and inter-agency meetings so that participants can share information and resources.

3. That information and resources on substance abuse be provided for youth and families at critical transition points in their lives.

4. That adults who are unaware of the issues be educated as to youth viewpoints on substance abuse issues.

5. That youth action committees be appointed, with honoraria, to give input to other regional authorities (e.g. schools, AADAC, regional health, Children's Services).

6. That Alberta youth be encouraged to express their opinions, ideas and solutions to issues on substance abuse.

7. That relative to substance abuse issues, Alberta media use positive youth experiences in their publications. The writings should include all youth regardless of race.

8. That assessment techniques and prevention programs be implemented to assess and address risk factors that are related to drug abuse. Prevention and early intervention programs will be designed for parents to teach their children about substances and decision making.

9. That more positions are made available for outreach counseling in the next year.

10. That in the next year prevention initiatives will be increased/enhanced to effectively address the impact of substance abuse on children in Alberta.

11. That free, accessible and efficient services and treatment programs be established which effectively implement programs that target the impact of substance abuse on Alberta youth.

12. That in the next year legislation be established which defines substance abuse, including alcohol, street drugs prescription drugs, tobacco, solvents, etc.

13. That in the next year a provincial network will be created to do a thorough needs analysis/issue review for each community in the province.

Violence, Crime and Safety

Recommendations:

1. That educators, the medical profession, police, government and the corporate communities join together in our communities, our schools, and in the media (TV, radio, print advertising), to promote education, awareness and understanding of the factors that contribute to youth crime and violence.

2. That an education program be developed to teach adults how to identify indicators of stress and abuse that children and youth are experiencing, and the fears children experience when dealing with this issue.

3. That seminars and workshops be developed involving everyone; and that twelve workshops be held within the next year.

4. That a program which celebrates diversity be developed.

5. That support for the establishment of youth councils in all communities be achieved in the next year, with the development of a guide to assist new youth councils.

6. That a meaningful, formal Forum of Youth be created as an independent legislative body reporting to the Legislative Assembly.

7. That a regional-based implementation framework be developed in the next year, for the delivery

of services to children.

8. That committed, long-term funding be acquired from three levels of government and the private sector to fund human resource positions and programs to meet the needs of children.

9. That adequate funding be obtained from public and private sectors in money, gifts-in-kind, employment opportunities, mentorship programs, role models, and sponsorship.

10. That life skills awareness and prevention-based curriculum be implemented in the educational system in early childhood.

11. That schools offer educational programs to teach students to express and deal with anger and problems in positive, non-violent ways.

12. That there be mandated implementation of safe and caring schools; and that all schools have a safe school plan which includes environmental design, responding to crisis, and post-crisis intervention.

13. That a provincial 'safe and caring centre' be created to build consistency into safe and caring programs and services, and that each community have an inter-agency group to serve the same function at the local level.

14. That government and community work together to promote greater education and awareness toward the goal of building on the strengths and relationships of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.

15. That implementation of a province-wide citizen review board for children-in-care should be achieved in the next year.

16. Promote family wellness in order to reduce family violence.

17. That implementation of the Healthy Families Program model (Hawaii) be implemented in the next year.

18. That cost reductions through savings on long term beds be applied to primary prevention programs such as Health for Two, Healthy Families, Head Start, LOOK AT ME, parenting programs, etc.

19. That corporal punishment be banned and replaced with non-violent discipline techniques.

20. That the justice system rely less on youth incarceration as a means to solve crime and violence, in favor of alternative options such as Healing and Sentencing Circles, Alternative Measures, Community Mediation, etc.

21. That certain minor youth offences be decriminalized.

22. That funding for universal day care should be achieved in the next year, and the raising of minimum standards for day care should be achieved in the next year.

23. That, within the next year, diversional justice programs receive more resources for social services provided to youth.

Families, Learning & Community

Recommendations:

1. That at least 3 youth representatives be appointed to each of the 18 regional child and family authorities, school boards, youth justice committees, and any other board that makes decisions on behalf of children and youth.

2. That a youth gathering (forum) be held for youth and by youth, achieved in the next year.

3. That within the next year, existing services will be maintained and additional resources will be committed to increasing early intervention and prevention programs.

4. That government commit to an early intervention focus in all service areas/ministries, and still maintain and build on existing early intervention programs.

5. That single parents on social assistance be permitted to stay at home for a period of at least one year after the birth of a child in order to facilitate/promote healthy child development.

6. Promote and celebrate the integral role parents play in the learning of their children through the provision of voice and teamwork.

7. That the provincial government give priority to the integration of its services to children, to ensure that all needs are addressed and met by a continuum of services.

8. That within the next year, an "Alberta road map" will be created to define roles and

responsibilities among stakeholders involved in delivering services to children.

9. Identify an inventory of services and resources, and share successful programs.

10. That a civic community be developed where everyone has a voice, everyone is aware of the issues and we all work together to solve problems.

11. Communities will meet and support the needs of children, youth and families through integrated service provision.

12. In the next year, agencies dealing with children's services will ensure ongoing, inclusive, clear communication.

13. That within the next year, agencies dealing with and funding services to children will be committed to sustained, long-term funding.

14. Develop new models of funding which ensure specific community and educational needs are addressed.

15. That funding for children's services be increased across the board.

16. That schools will be community focus centres and community learning centres.

17. That all neighborhood schools be responsible for meeting, within the school, the special/individual needs of all students in their catchment area.

18. That the School Act be changed so parents have the right to choose their child's educational placement within the Alberta public education system.

19. That a full-time, full-day kindergarten program be provided for all Alberta children.

20. That an assessment be carried out to determine those schools most in need; and that a meal program be provided immediately for the children in these schools.

21. That legislation be implemented to limit school class size, and the time students must spend on buses.

22. That an early intervention program be implemented in every school, staffed by paid, certified personnel.

23. That core class specialization be implemented at the high school level.

24. That safe and caring schools be promoted.

25. That curriculum design be modified to celebrate individuality.

26. In the next year we will commit to using the "Children's Filter" at all levels and in all communities.

27. That a universal infant/family screening program be implemented in every community in Alberta to identify children/families in need of support.

28. In the next year holistic family resource centres will be established and supported.

29. That high quality, meaningful recreation and leisure opportunities be established at the neighbourhood level to meet the daily developmental needs of children and families.

30. Place the focus on the Aboriginal pillar in the next year.

31. That stability for child welfare children be ensured.

32. Create a children's advocate who will speak for all children. (Maintain current office and funding of current child welfare advocate but create another advocate for all children.)

33. That the 'Hawaii Healthy Start' screening model be put in place and used in every community in Alberta.

34. That the government re-prioritize spending to eliminate family poverty by changing, for example, the debt reduction act to require 75% of any surplus to be reinvested into social programs and supports.

35. Improve accountability.

Appendix 3

Supplementary Information

Much information was compiled and referenced in the preparation of this report. If readers require additional information, listed below is Supplementary Information related to this report. A copy of these reference materials may be consulted by contacting one of the following provincial government ministries.

- Justice and Attorney General
  Phone: (780) 427-2745 Fax: (780) 427-6821
- Learning
  Phone: (780) 427-7219 Fax: (780) 427-0591
- Health and Wellness
  Phone: (780) 427-7164 Fax: (780) 427-1171
- Community Development
  Phone: (780) 427-6530 Fax: (780) 427-1496
- Human Resources and Employment
  Phone: (780) 427-2734 Fax: (780) 422-9556
- International and Intergovernmental Relations (Aboriginal Affairs)
  Phone: (780) 427-2180 Fax: (780) 427-1321
- Children's Services
  Phone: (780) 422-3004 Fax: (780) 422-3071

List of Supplementary Information

(Under separate cover)

- Starting the Circle: Issues and Questions background information for the First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum
- Results of Province-Wide Youth Survey conducted for the First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum, October 1999
- Transcription of Idea Wall comments by Forum participants
- List of Participants—First Circle – Uniting for Children Forum